# Charlton SPOTLIGHT

PAIII TRIBUTE

*Exploring the History of the Charlton Comics Group*

ARGO PRESS
No. 4
$7.95 in U.S.A.

## THE ART OF PETE "PAM" MORISI

**MEMOIRS, INTERVIEWS & COMMENTARY by**

**Steve Skeates**
**Bill Pearson**
**Mark Burbey**
**Glen Johnson**
**Ron Frantz**
**Steve Morisi**

**WITH RARE & UNPUBLISHED ART by**

**Pete Morisi**

*new* **Weirdlings** *cartoons by*

**Nicola Cuti**

*at Charlton's end*

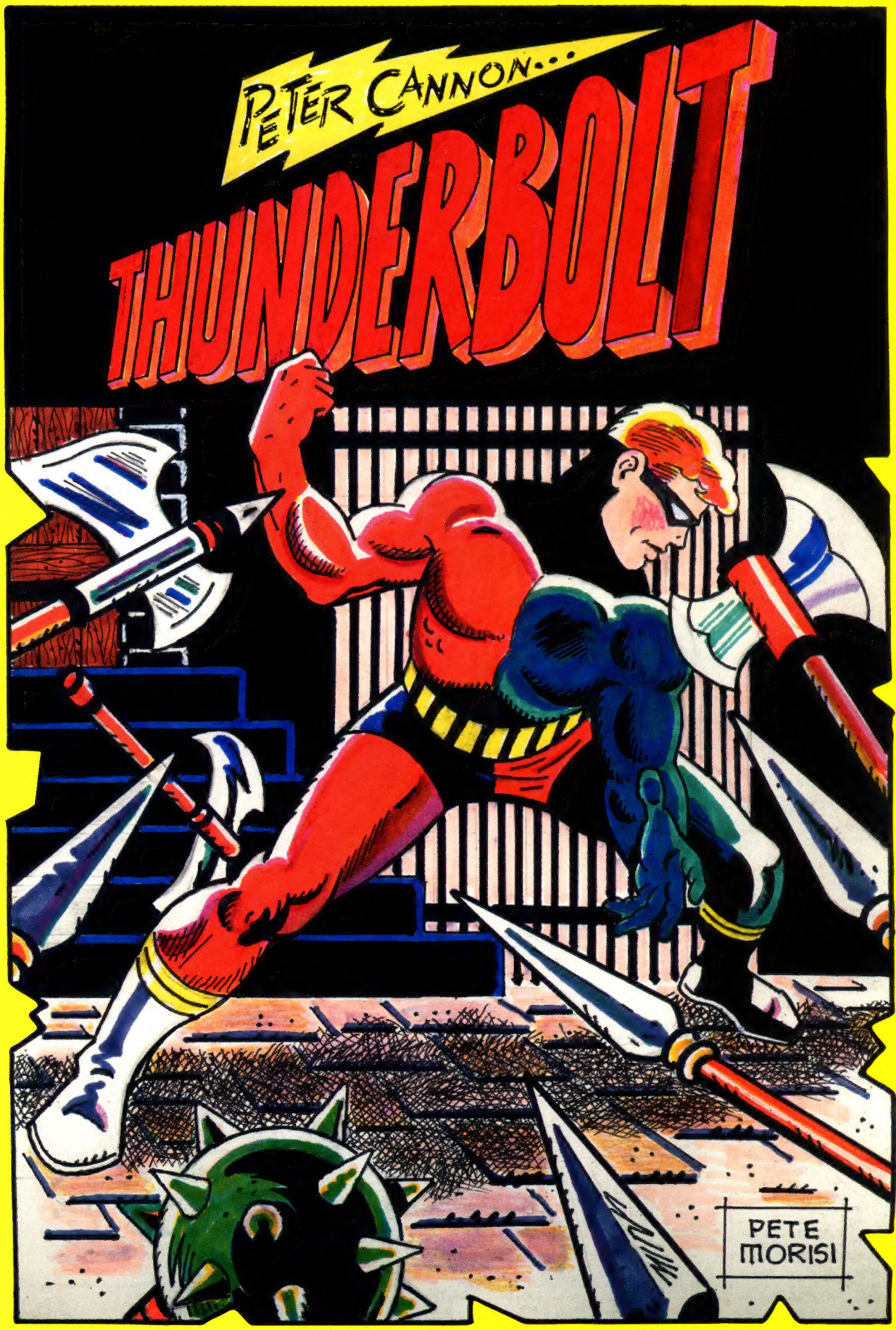
**Tom Christopher**

*a look at Charlton's*

**MONSTER MAGS**

**THE MAGAZINE FOR CHARLTON COMICS FANS!**

*Thunderbolt TM & © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi*



**Pete Morisi**'s most famous creations and characters in his contribution to the 1975 limited-edition *Street Enterprises Benefit Portfolio*. From a copy of the original art, courtesy of Glen Johnson. Johnny Dynamite TM & © 2005 Max Allan Collins & Terry Beatty; Thunderbolt TM & © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi; Lash LaRue TM & © 2005 the respective copyright holder; Kid Montana TM & © Charlton Comics Group.

# Charlton SPOTLIGHT

Exploring the History of the Charlton Comics Group

**Peter Cannon . . . Thunderbolt**
*original art courtesy of Glen Johnson*
*Thunderbolt TM & © 2005*
*Estate of Peter A. Morisi*

**Johnny Dynamite**
*from an unpublished mid-1980s poster*
*Johnny Dynamite TM & © 2005*
*Max Allan Collins & Terry Beatty*

# the art of Pete "PAM" Morisi

PAM Photo & Thunderbolt TM & © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi

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***Special thanks*** *to* Glen Johnson, Val Morisi, and Steve Morisi.

***Charlton Spotlight*** is published by Argo Press, P.O. Box 4201, Austin, TX 78765-4201, **charlton@flash.net** / **www.charltonspotlight.com**. Price $7.95 US/$8.95 Canada/$15.00 elsewhere; two-issue subscription $14.00/$16.00/$28.00, postage-paid in US funds. Entire contents © 2005 Argo Press except as otherwise noted. Because exact copyright status of most Charlton publications is difficult to ascertain, we attribute image copyright to *Charlton Comics Group* throughout, except where current copyright holders are known.

**PAM: Walking the Comics Beat**
*Michael Ambrose* ..... 2

**Mighty Tight: Stylized in Black & White**
*Bill Pearson* ..... 9

**The Going-Gray Kid:**
**Canons & Taboos in the Mild Wild West**
*Steve Skeates* ..... 10

**The Explosive World of Johnny Dynamite**
*Mark Burbey* ..... 16

**Pete Morisi . . . Comic Book Artist**
*Glen Johnson* ..... 20

**Son of PAM**
***A Talk with PAM's Collaborator Steve Morisi***
*interview conducted by Michael Ambrose* ..... 28

**Charlton Classic Reprint**
"Strangler on the Loose"
*Story by Steve Morisi, art by Pete Morisi* ..... 31

**Pete Morisi: Before and After Charlton**
*Ron Frantz* ..... 39

**With Pen & Brush: PAM**
*Howard Leroy Davis* ..... 50

***The Pete Morisi Gallery*** ..... 51

***The Pete Morisi Charlton Index*** ..... 54

*OTHER FEATURES*

**For 35¢ Plain**
***Charlton's Monster Magazines Remembered***
*Denis Tiani* ..... 61

**My Season with Charlton**
*Tom Christopher* ..... 65

**The Weirdlings**
*Nicola Cuti* ..... 69

**The Division Street Ramble**
*Editorial matters, letters, news & reviews* ..... 70

**Charlton Comics Checklist: Year by Year Part 3: 1959–1962**
*compiled by Dan Stevenson* ..... 75

# PAM
# *walking the comics beat*

## *A look at the life and comics career of* **Pete Morisi**

*by* **Michael Ambrose**

**FOR TWENTY YEARS,** the identity of the artist behind the initials "PAM" remained a closely guarded secret from the comics-reading public.

Unsigned stories by this mystery artist were often mistaken for the work of George Tuska. Editors at Charlton Comics kept that secret, refusing to divulge PAM's real name in print to the many fans who wrote letters to *Thunderbolt,* making guesses and begging for the answer. Even as late as the early 1970s, by which time comics fandom was a large, well-organized movement and many comics professionals had become more or less public figures, PAM's real identity was still largely known only to his fellow pros. It would be the middle of the 1970s and PAM's retirement from his "real-world" job before the artist abandoned the initials and signed his real name once again.

Who was the mystery artist known only as PAM? Was he a costumed crime-fighter with a secret identity, like Batman? Strangely enough, such a fanciful notion was not far from the truth.

**Above:** Portrait of the artist as a young man, late 1940s.
**Below left:** A happy couple, Pete Morisi and Louise Massie in 1949.
Photos courtesy of Val and Russ Morisi; © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi.

**PETER ANTHONY MORISI** was born January 7, 1928, in the Park Slope district of Brooklyn, New York. Details of Pete's early years are sketchy, but by 1946 he was attending the School of Industrial Arts (now the School of Art and Design) in Manhattan, where classmates included future comics greats Alex Toth, Sy Barry, and Joe Giella. After a year and a half at the SIA, Pete was drafted into the U.S. Army and served as a private from 1948 to 1950, stationed in Colorado. In 1950 Pete married Louise Massie, and in short order sons Steve, Russ, and Val came along to enlarge the Morisi household.

Morisi knew early on that when he grew up he wanted to be either a cop or a comic book artist. "I can't remember *not* having a pencil or piece of chalk in my hand," Pete told interviewer Glen Johnson in the pages of *Comic Book Artist* #9 (Aug. 2000). "I'd draw on paper bags, the cement ground of alleyways, and sometimes make up my own strips in my school copybooks." Pete's artistic influences included Milton Caniff, Noel Sickles, Frank Robbins, Lou Fine, Will Eisner, Reed Crandall, and especially Jack Kirby. Pete was ten years old in 1938 when Superman debuted in *Action Comics*, and it was the appearance of the world's first bona fide comic book superhero that, as he put it, "pushed me over the edge" to become a comics artist himself. During his teen years in the 1940s Pete had a part-time delivery job that took him into Manhattan, where the major comics publishers operated, and as an art student he would stop in at their offices to ask for any original art they could give him. In this way Pete began t

acquire what eventually became an impressive collection of Golden Age originals by Jack Cole, Jerry Robinson, John Prentice, Jack Kirby, Dan Barry, Frank Robbins, Alfred Andriola, Lee Ames, Lou Fine, George Tuska, and Hal Foster.

Pete's earliest comics work appears to have been minor (and unidentified) inks for Eastern Color's *Famous Funnies* sometime in 1946, though he became active professionally beginning in 1948, with crime and historical strips for Fox Features, work done at least partly while he was in the service. After his hitch was up, Pete used his G.I. Bill benefits to get further schooling at Burne Hogarth's School of Visual Arts, again in Manhattan. Some of Pete's fellow students there were Roy Krenkel, Ross Andru, Wally Wood, Rocke Mastroserio, Bill Molno, and Pat Masulli. During his early pro period Pete primarily assisted other artists, inking for Colton Waugh on the *Dickie Dare* strip, for Dan Barry on *Flash Gordon,* and for Mike Roy on *The Saint.* Comic book work included background finishes for Mike Roy and John Belfi on "The Heap" for Hillman Periodicals, "Crimebuster" for Charles Biro, and *Daredevil* for Lev Gleason. Pete shared studios at various times with fellow cartoonists Don Heck, Lee Ames, George Tuska, Don Perlin, Bill Siegel, and Sy Barry.

Morisi soon became a full-time working comics artist with an impressive list of regular accounts. He embraced a wide range of genres—romance, horror, western, crime, science fiction, adventure. He inked Fawcett's *Lash LaRue* and found plenty of work at Allen Hardy's Comic Media, with stories and covers for *Danger, Dear Lonely Hearts, Death Valley, Dynamite, Horrific, War Fury,* and *Weird Terror.* At Lev Gleason he contributed to *Black Diamond Western* and *Crime Does Not Pay.* Over at Timely/Atlas (later Marvel Comics) he did western and weird yarns for Stan Lee for *Arizona Kid, Rawhide Kid, Journey Into Unknown Worlds,* and *Strange Tales* and inked Chic Stone on *Sub-Mariner.* There were stops along the way at Quality, St. John, Fiction House, Harvey, Crestwood, Pines, and eventually Charlton.

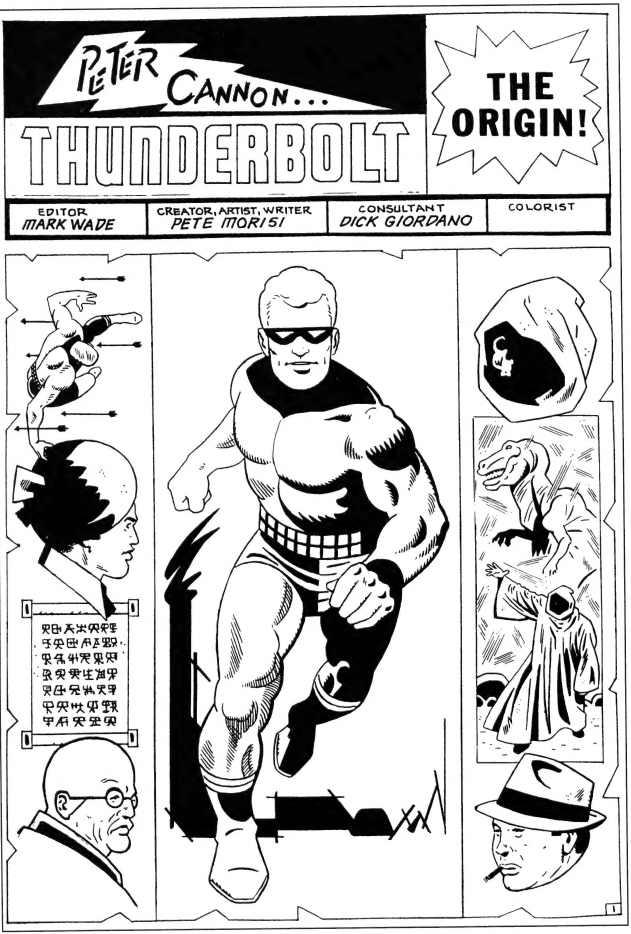
Second only to Thunderbolt, the character Pete Morisi is most famous for is Johnny Dynamite—the tough, one-eyed private dick, the "wild man from Chicago." As Mark Burbey explores in his article in this issue of *Charlton Spotlight*, the Johnny Dynamite stories running in Comic Media's *Dynamite* from 1953 to '54 were uncommonly gritty, brutal, and adult. The first JD tales were written by Ken Fitch (as William Waugh) and drawn by Pete in a classic noir style. "Ken and I talked about Dynamite, but never plotted or conferred on scripts," Pete told me in correspondence. "The early scripts were his, and I did the art. I read, someplace, that Ken was involved with the creation of Johnny Dynamite. Not true. Dynamite was my baby. I suggested the name, the private-eye character, and story line to Allen Hardy, who liked it. He dropped the adventure-style *Dynamite* title he was publishing, and Johnny Dynamite was born. As talented as Ken was, he could never grasp the Johnny Dynamite character. Allen Hardy wanted the Mike Hammer-type private eye that I described to him, and Ken was giving him Sherlock Holmes. So, after a few issues, Hardy asked me to do both the story and the art." Pete was amazed to find in later years that comics fans continued to seek out and enjoy the Johnny Dynamite stories and remembered the hand that drew them in their original brief run.

**Above:** Pete Morisi as a newly minted NYPD officer in 1956. Photo courtesy of Val and Russ Morisi; © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi. **Below:** Nice pre-Code Morisi splash page from **Journey Into Unknown Worlds** #9, Feb, 1952. Scan courtesy of Chris Brown; © 2005 Marvel Characters, Inc.

MAN HAS DEVELOPED HIS BRAIN TO THE POINT WHERE HE KNOWS ALMOST OF THE ANSWERS
EXCEPT A FEW... AND ONE OF THESE IS THE UNKNOWN THAT EXISTS
BEYOND TIME!
FOR JUST THE FEW MOMENTS IT TAKES YOU TO READ THIS, SOMEONE OR SOMETHING FROM THE UNKNOWN HAS BEEN OUR VISITOR!
YES, LET IT RUN WILD—AND THEN TRY TO STOP!
IT BACK TO NORMAL AGAIN, JUST TRY!
MAN AND HIS PUNY PLANET, WERE LONG PAST CLAIM. THEY WERE NOW THE PLAYTHINGS OF THE UNKNOWN!
THE NEXT DAY, IT RAINED AND SNOWED MORE THAN USUAL FOR THIS SEASON OF THE YEAR!
BUT IT'S BECOMING UNUSUAL!

**THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY** was in an upheaval by 1954. Senate hearings on comics as contributors to juvenile delinquency, pressure from parent organizations, and most famously the publication of Frederic Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* had publishers of more extreme comics material on the run. Smaller outfits with only marginal newsstand presence disappeared. Others found it more lucrative to drop their comics lines and move into the safer (and more profitable) world of paperback book and men's magazine publishing. Faced with a diminishing account list, those comics creators with any steady work held onto it. Many others scrambled for what they could get. Some left the field of comics altogether or found more legitimate work while doing a little comics on the side. One of the latter was Pete Morisi.

Some of the work Morisi had done for failing publishers like Comic Media became Charlton Comics property in 1955, when the Connecticut fringe comics purveyor took




Splash page of the final Thunderbolt tale by Pete Morisi, who did the complete 19-page story for a 1986 *Secret Origins* project at DC Comics that failed to come together. This art and the image on page 7, probably Morisi's last professional comics work, are published here for the first time with the kind permission of Val Morisi. From a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of Bill Schelly. Thunderbolt TM & © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi.

FRED! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT... BUT WE'RE IN THE JUNGLE!
AND THERE'S THE IDOL... AT THE FOOT OF THAT TREE! THE YEARNING ONE HAS RETURNED, JULIE... BECAUSE IN SOME WAY THE JUNGLE HAS COME TO IT!
FOR A MOMENT THE STIFLING FOG CLOSED DOWN LIKE A SHROUD! THEN IT ROSE IN STREAMERS THROUGH THE JAGGED PALM TREES!

eclectic line. Thunderbolt debuted in *Peter Cannon . . . Thunderbolt* #1 (Jan. 1966). (The title picked up new numbering two months later with #51, continuing the canceled *Son of Vulcan,* in one of those inexplicable editorial moves Charlton was wont to make.) Reader response to this different, thoughtful kind of superhero was positive from the start. Peter Cannon, alias Thunderbolt, was a reluctant crimefighter, seeking danger only when forced by events beyond his control . . . and the pointed prodding of his friend and companion, Tabu.

Pete's first major continuing feature series since Johnny Dynamite was his pride and joy, but he found producing a regular series in his off-duty time to be a daunting, hectic task. Writing in particular was for Pete a slow, painful process to get a story he could live with. After seven bimonthly issues, he was unable to complete the eighth installment on deadline. Pat Boyette was called in to write and draw *Thunderbolt* #57 (May 1967). Pete returned in #58 (July 1967) with a full eighteen-pager, but it would be his last T-bolt story for Charlton. He voluntarily withdrew from the title, providing only the cover to the Boyette-written-and-drawn #59. The series lasted but one more issue, ending with #60 (Nov. 1967), scripted by Dennis O'Neil (as "Sergius O'Shaugnessy") and again drawn by Boyette. Disappointed but resigned, Pete returned to westerns, rejoining his old friend Kid Montana, and also produced two years' worth of the obscure, intriguing "Man Called Loco" series (scripted by O'Neil) in *Texas Rangers in Action.*

advantage of the publishing shake-out to scoop up rights, titles, and inventory from closing shops at bargain rates. In this way Morisi became a Charlton artist. With Charlton's continuation of former Comic Media, Fox, and Fawcett properties, Morisi art began to appear in *Cody of the Pony Express, Death Valley, Danger, Danger and Adventure, Johnny Dynamite* (retitled from CM's *Dynamite*), *This Is Suspense,* and *Rookie Cop.*

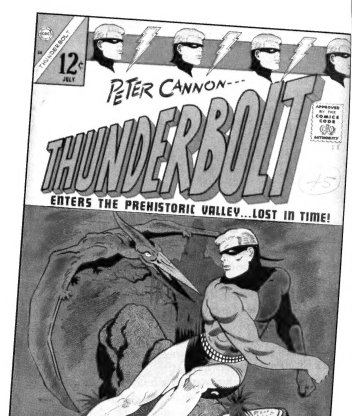
In 1956, faced with a greatly diminished field of opportunity, Morisi made a fateful career move and joined the New York City Police Department, thus fulfilling the other of his childhood dreams. Department guidelines forbade moonlighting, but Pete couldn't give up comics completely. He simply started signing his work with his initials: "P.A.M." or sometimes just "P.M." This preserved a degree of anonymity. From that point to the end of his career, Pete Morisi as PAM was a part-time comics artist, working almost always on open deadlines, one script at a time. Fortunately, Charlton was amenable to the arrangement, and he grew to become a prolific and regular contributor to the Charlton line.

From 1956 on Pete produced series stories featuring Billy the Kid, Cheyenne Kid, Kid Montana (with whom Pete would have an enduring relationship), Lash LaRue, Masked Raider, and Wyatt Earp, with many miscellaneous short western yarns in *Six-Gun Heroes, Texas Rangers in Action,* and *Outlaws of the West.* Most were scripted by veteran Charlton staff writer Joe Gill. "He was the kind of writer I liked," Pete said of Gill in a 2002 letter. "His thinking was always, 'if you don't like certain things that I write—change them'—and I did, quite often. As a rule, he wrote a simple plot, and a simple script, with simple words, and damn—he made it work." In 1964 and '65 Pete produced a memorable run of Gunmaster stories. Also in 1965, Pete created his most enduring comics legacy: Thunderbolt.

**RESPONDING TO EDITOR DICK GIORDANO'S** request for a costumed hero to add to the growing Charlton "action-hero" lineup of Captain Atom, Blue Beetle, Peacemaker, Judomaster, and the Fightin' Five, Morisi created a character whose powers derived not from radiation, super serums, or other gimmicks, but from the power of the human mind itself, expanded by diligent study and special training in a hidden lamasery in the Himalayas. It was a perfect fit with Charlton's

**Above:** Detail from page 2 of Morisi's "Idol," from **Mystery Tales** #43, July 1956, is an homage to Frank Frazetta's famous "Untamed Love" from **Personal Love** #32, 1955. © 2005 Marvel Characters, Inc.
**Below:** Morisi portrays the Comic Media horror hosts, from **Horrific** #9, Jan. 1954. © Comic Media. Scans courtesy of Chris Brown.

A GLIMPSE OF THE PIT
WERE ONCE AGAIN TO THRILL YOU... TO CHILL YOU... IS THAT MYSTERIOUS NARRATOR OF THE UNKNOWN, THE TELLER!
GREETINGS, LOVERS OF THE OCCULT. I'M SURE YOU'VE MET MY ASSOCIATES HERE — EVEN IF YOU DIDN'T RECOGNIZE THEM AT THE TIME! FROM LEFT TO RIGHT — FREDDY, DEMON; GARRY GHOUL; VICTOR VAMPIRE AND WALTER WEREWOLF!
TALES OF HATE by the TELLER
TALES OF HORROR by the TELLER




First and last all-Morisi issues of T-bolt. **Left: Thunderbolt** #1, Jan. 1966. **Right:** #58 [#8], July 1967. Thunderbolt TM & © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi.

**MAJOR CHANGES CAME TO CHARLTON** in 1968. The action-hero line was summarily dropped. Editor Dick Giordano moved to DC Comics, taking several of Charlton's top artists, notably Jim Aparo, with him. Assuming the comics managing editor slot was artist Sal Gentile. Western comics as a viable genre began to fade at the end of the decade, and Charlton would cancel all but a handful by 1970. Not skipping a beat, Morisi accepted whatever scripts Gentile gave him—romance, the occasional war story, weird and SF—still on his own extended-deadline terms. From then until 1976, PAM contributed more than one hundred stories, primarily for *Ghostly Tales, Ghostly Haunts, Ghost Manor, Haunted,* and *Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves*. His last major Charlton work appeared in five of the six published issues of *Vengeance Squad,* created and written by Joe Gill.

**THE YEAR 1976** was a pivotal one for Pete Morisi, as he finally retired from the NYPD after twenty years' service. Pete had been anticipating a return to full-time comics work once freed from the demands of his other career, but it was not to be. In late 1976 Charlton suspended publication of all its original comic books. The loss of what was really his only active account abruptly changed Pete's plans. Finally able to abandon the "PAM" pseudonym and sign his comics work again with his full name, Pete Morisi found himself virtually without a market for his talents. Comics themselves had begun to change; the simple, straightforward action-adventure stories that were Charlton's and Morisi's specialty were becoming a thing of the past. Increasingly, comics were written and drawn by creators who had come up through the ranks of comics fandom and wanted to change their old favorites, giving them a grittier, rawer edge and shaking up the old ways of doing things. Like many veterans, Morisi found himself more and more alienated from the industry.

Pete would eventually regain all rights to his baby, Thunderbolt, negotiating a complicated deal with Charlton and some of its overseas licensees. Now that he finally owned his creation outright, however, he could not find a publisher who would consider it. But this, too, would change.

Pete returned to comics in the mid-1980s, when DC, having acquired the action-hero characters from Charlton in 1983, began to make use of them in new series. Several Thunderbolt stories were published without Morisi's permission, though as Pete explained in his *Comic Book Artist* interview he did not object because he expected he would eventually have a deal with DC to do new T-bolt stories and that DC would eventually own the character (giving him a piece of the action). DC began developing a weekly comics project (*Comics Cavalcade Weekly,* aka *Blockbuster Weekly*) using the former Charlton characters, including T-bolt, and in 1984 Pete wrote and drew nine two-page installments for the project before the whole thing was shelved. Later, Pete would again recreate the T-bolt origin, writing and drawing a full 19-page story for a 1986 DC

THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS... UNTIL I FINALLY MADE A DECISION!
CIVILIZATION IS A JUNGLE THAT FOSTERS ITS OWN PROBLEMS... AND I WANT NO PART OF IT! I'LL LIVE MY LIFE, MY WAY, AND DO UNTO OTHERS... AS THEY DO UNTO ME!
I WAS COMFORTABLE WITH MY THOUGHTS, BUT THINGS WEREN'T ALL THAT SIMPLE AT THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY!
FANTASTIC! A DINOSAUR EGG, OVER ONE HUNDRED MILLION YEARS OLD!
YES... YES... IT ARRIVED HERE THIS MORNING, IN AN UNMARKED CRATE!
THE NEWS SPREAD... EVEN TO A SECRET ICE CAVE... ON TOP OF THE WORLD!
...WHERE THE EGG WILL BE ON DISPLAY! IN OTHER NEWS, LUCIFER BARNES, ONE TIME HIT-MAN FOR ORGANIZED CRIME, LEFT PRISON TODAY AFTER SERVING A TEN...
DID YOU HEAR THAT, MY FROZEN PETS? THE DINOSAUR EGG I DUG OUT OF THIS CAVE WILL SERVE ME WELL!
CIVILIZATION AND PETER CANNON WILL SOON KNOW MY WRATH!
THE ANCIENT SCROLLS THAT I SECRETED BEFORE MY STUDIES WERE INTERRUPTED, TAUGHT ME MUCH! MENTAL TELEPATHY WAS BUT ONE OF THE SCIENCES!
I MUST PROJECT MY THOUGHTS ...PROJECT AND MAKE CONTACT... WITH ONE LUCIFER BARNES!

Page 11 of Pete's unpublished Thunderbolt story for DC's 1986 **Secret Origins** project. From a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of Bill Schelly. Thunderbolt TM & © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi.

*Secret Origins* project. This again fell through, and the finished art was returned to Pete, where it remained in his files until it was rediscovered after his death. Pete's family has kindly allowed *Charlton Spotlight* to reproduce two pages from this story. They appear in print here for the first time.

DC tried again with a new *Thunderbolt* series in 1992 (without Pete's direct input), which failed to gain significant fan following and was canceled the following year. Thereafter all rights to T-bolt were again returned to Pete. By this time physical disabilities kept him from drawing for extended periods, and though from time to time publishers would approach him with ideas for reprinting and/or reviving the character, in the end Pete was unable to do anything more with T-bolt.

**PETE AND I BEGAN TO CORRESPOND** in July 2002. I wanted to ask Pete new questions about his comics career toward an eventual full-scale interview. At first Pete balked at the idea, doubting he had more to add about Thunderbolt or anything else. But I persisted, and despite himself Pete began talking about the old days to an inquisitive fan once again. He loved to talk about comics, and his memory was sharp. Pete's other interests in his last years included watching and researching old movies, listening to music, and spending time with his dogs. Apart from comics, we also discussed favorite singers, discovering a strong mutual interest in the early work of Frank Sinatra. "Yeah, Sinatra was a bum and an angel at the same time," Pete said, "but the voice quality, phrasing, diction was there. There have been better singers, Como and Damone to name a couple, but none of them brought the total package to the table." I made Pete a CD copy of Sinatra's classic Columbia album *For Only the Lonely*. "What a nice thing to do," he replied. "I don't have that disk. 'Ebb Tide,' 'One for My Baby' . . . man, if you want to cry, this is the place!" In return, Pete told me his Sinatra story:

> I was a teenager when I went to see Sinatra sing on *Your Lucky Strike Hit Parade* radio show. After the show the crowd waited by the stage door to get a closer look at him. I figured that the limo that picked him up had to go down a one-way street, so I left the crowd and ran to the far corner where there was a traffic light. Sure enough the limo stopped a few feet away from me and I (talk about nerve) simply opened the door and stepped inside. Sinatra was seated between two massive bodyguards, who leaned my way with open paws. I said, "Hiya, Frank, how's New York treating you?" He said, "Just fine, son, just fine" as he put his hands on the shoulders of his bodyguards and pulled them back. (I hate to think of what would have happened if they got to me.) Then Sinatra nodded his head and smiled, and I did the same, as I exited the limo. So, that's my Sinatra story. Frank spent a minute of his life with me, and I spent a minute of my life with him. A common minute that I'll never forget.

I sent Pete copies of pages from Charlton's *Cody of the Pony Express* #8 (Oct. 1955) to get his reaction to several panels that had his distinctive face and figure work, though most of the art was obviously not by Morisi. "Got the pages," Pete wrote back. "Ughhhh! Bad stuff . . . but Fox Features was a place to start. One page, I hate to admit it, is mine. Pencils, inks, and lettering." Other pages had "bits and pieces of my stuff, a head here, and some inking there . . . nothing I care to admit to, or remember. Still . . . it's nice to see that I've

CODY OF THE PONY EXPRESS
DIFFICULTY THE HORSE'S RECEIVING QUIET AND SETTLED OUT INTO THE PLATEAU
JIM, I RECOGNIZE ONE OF THE MEN! I'LL TRY TO HOLD THEM UNTIL YOU RETURN! HE MUST HAVE ESCAPED! YOU TAKE UNDER SIDLEY TO GERONIMO'S STRONGHOLD! I'M GOING TO GET MY HORSE AND TRAIL THESE OUTLAWS!
I KNOW! BILL CODY HE'S TRAILING HIS HORSE! LET'S GO!
HEY!
GOSH, YOU BEEN TRAINING FOR IT AND I'M LOOKIN' AT YOU!
STOP! THIS FIGHTING, FELLAWS, OR YOU'LL ALL LAND IN THE JAIL! . . . THIS IS A LAW-ABIDING TOWN!
YOU'RE JUST THE WOMAN I'M LOOKING FOR, DENNEY!
GET OUTTA HERE . . . GET OUTTA THIS TOWN . . . AND WAY OUT!
ALL RIGHT! BUT I'LL GET THIS BAD YET, TWO WHICH I DO IT'LL BE WHICH!
LATER, ONE OF THE BRAVE OUTLAWS, SLIM PENDING, CHECKED IN WITH HIS BOSS, MORE BLACK, AND GAVE HIM INFORMATION ABOUT A VALUABLE SHIPMENT OF JEWELRY GOING TO SAN FRANCISCO . . .
ONLY TROUBLE IS, THE STAGE COACH'S GOING THRU A MEAN ROUTE, HOW?
GET IT OUT OF THE STRONG WHILE IT'S COMING!
SLIM WENT TO GRAYHORN CORNERS, BUT NEVER GET ABOUT THROUGHOUT JIM BRICKER.
I WANT TILL BLACK HERRS TO PUT THE STRONG BOX ON! I'LL GET YOU, NOW!
REACH FOR THE SKY, DENVER!
I WILL LOOK LIKE YOU, NOT HERE JUST IN TIME! I'LL TAKE CARE RIGHT TO GET HIM!

Partial Pete pencils and inks on page 10 of **Cody of the Pony Express** #8, Oct. 1955, Fox Features inventory recycled by Charlton. © Charlton Comics Group.

improved, somewhat, over the years." I asked him about the famous incident in which he jumped over a desk to grab Victor Fox, who owed Pete (and many other artists) money for work already delivered and paid for with rubber checks. "Bravery had nothing to do with my leaping across a conference table to get my hands on Victor Fox," Pete said. "Money was tight in those days, and that was eating money he owed me. Sheer anger was what got me going . . . and I didn't like the idea of being cheated. I was also trying hard to break out of a mold that presented me with a factory job, driving a truck, working in construction, etc. . . . the only jobs (and future) available for a ghetto kid. Hey, don't get me started. I could go on and on!"

Our correspondence faltered in April 2003. Pete failed to respond to e-mails, and I assumed he was busy or under the weather, or maybe needed a break from rehashing old times. What I did not know was that Lou, Pete's wife of 53 years, was then going through her final illness, and would pass away in May. He himself grew gravely ill shortly thereafter. Pete Morisi died on October 12, 2003.

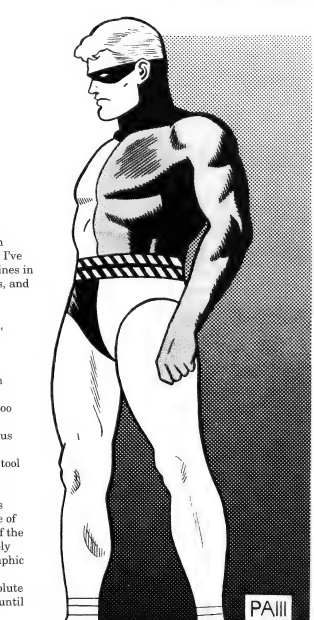
**THOUGH WE NEVER GOT AROUND** to finishing that full-scale interview, I knew as soon as I learned of Pete's passing that I would try to do the next best thing. This issue of *Charlton Spotlight* is a tribute to the life and times of Pete Morisi. I invite you now to explore the following pages, wherein we'll hear from comics pros and fans who knew and worked with Pete, and examine more of the astonishing art and career of Charlton's "mystery artist" . . . PAM.

*—Michael Ambrose*

# Mighty Tight
## STYLIZED in BLACK & WHITE

### *by* Bill Pearson

**AMONG THE** most fascinating aspects of cartooning, to me, are the unlimited variations possible of putting pictures on paper.




T-bolt as he appeared in **Charlton Bullseye** #3, 1975. Courtesy of Bob Layton & CPL/Gang. Thunderbolt TM & © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi.

As a letterer in years past, I've worked on original art delicately rendered in pencil by people whose hands obviously caressed the paper like a lover, and I've also worked on pages where the pencil was used as a weapon, gouging the lines in deep and harsh, like slashes of a knife! Cartoonists come in all shapes, sizes, and dispositions.

Pete Morisi began drawing comics in the 1950s, about the same time as another artist named Gene Colan. Their styles weren't that dissimilar then, both derivatives of the illustrative daily strips of people like Alex Raymond (*Rip Kirby*), and Stan Drake (*Juliet Jones*) and other successful syndicated cartoonists. Over the years, each felt confident enough to develop his own unique style; in their cases, in almost the exact opposite direction from each other.

Colan was obviously conscious, as he drew, that people and often fabric too were constantly in motion, that portraying them in outline wasn't really conveying the fluidity. Over the years, his pictures became ever more tenuous and flowing, his figures distorted in ever looser images that seemed to float before your eyes, almost nothing standing still. Ultimately Colan's favorite tool was his pencil, which could easier fashion the pulsating, in-and-out focused universe of his imagination.

Morisi, like my old friend Dan Adkins, had a different perspective. As his work progressed, he was just as obviously intrigued in finding the exact line of an arm or the exact fold of a pant leg that could capture the precise action of the figure, eliminating all extraneous detail. His was a technique that ultimately evolved to a formal extreme, attempting to minimize his illustrations to graphic symbols, every action caught in a frozen tableau.

Morisi's ambition was the perfection of his ink rendering technique, absolute mastery of his tools. Again, like Adkins, he would apply ink to a large area until it was a uniform solid black even though he knew the camera wouldn't distinguish the difference if it were an uneven gray in spots on the original art.

You can't criticize either artist for going too far, though some of us with a more centered perspective might suggest such was the case, because each succeeded by his own values, and each satisfied the editors who continued to purchase their work.

I never met or spoke with Morisi, but many of his pages went through my hands when I was an editor at Charlton, and I definitely admired how clean and well-designed they were, simply as graphic images, apart from what I also perceived as emotionless, static storytelling. Many readers, I knew, preferred these simple graphic bridges in the stories they liked to read. Readers who would find Colan's ambiguous pictures confusing and annoying.

I'd long known drawing comics was a moonlighting job for this professional policeman, an obsessive hobby occupation for a man who probably lived by rigid methods and thought patterns, a "just the facts, ma'am" personality. I'll bet he was an interesting guy, and I hope to learn more about him in this tribute issue of *Charlton Spotlight*.

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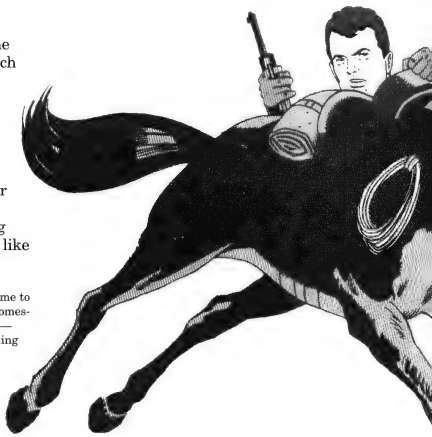
# The Going-Gray Kid

## Canons & Taboos in the Mild Wild West

### *by* **Steve Skeates**



**I MAY HAVE** been delving deeper into the dark, immersing myself within that which these days surely would be summarily adorned with that rather annoyingly popular and often a tad too indiscriminately applied "grim and gritty" label—the raw, the unvarnished, the utterly primal—yet, to the youthful, energetic, and relatively untested author I was back there in 1967, eager (in fact, downright desperate) to write something with some real meat on its bones, it was like I had just received a promotion.

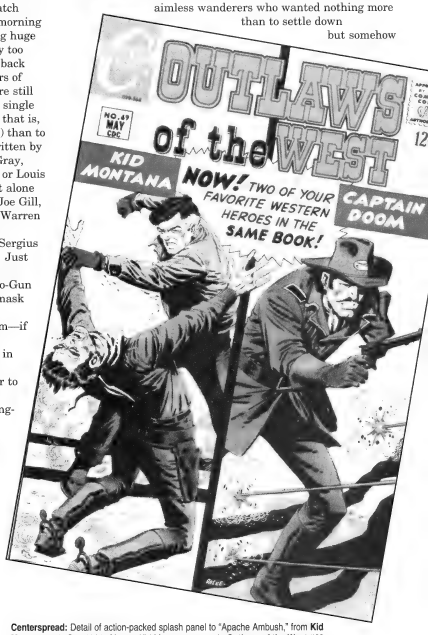
No raise in pay of course—nothing that would allow me to put a bit more food on the table or even move from domestic to imported, beerwise. Not even a grand new title—Assistant or Associate Something-or-Other—something that would look quite spiffy (and then some!) upon some future résumé. Still, all of a sudden Charlton editor-in-chief Dick Giordano had moved me from performing the scripting chores on a certain series in *Outlaws of the West* starring that one-armed, understandably bitter "relic" of the Civil War known as Captain Doom (a worthy character in his own right but certainly no icon) all the way up to concocting the thrilling (at least I *hoped* they'd be thrilling) adventures of a returning particular favorite amongst those I prefer to refer to (and, even imbued with the sort of objectivity that only the passage of time can bestow, I harbor no qualms whatsoever about adding here and now the words "rightfully so") as the more discerning fans of the western action epic. In short, more, I suspect, by luck than via skill—certainly I had demonstrated upon other series I had handled a certain writing competency, yet I'd say this was much more merely a case of my being in the right place at the right time—I had (however I had done so) just corralled the opportunity to write for none other than Kid Montana, Gunfighter.

Not impressed? Well, most likely you shouldn't be. The oater, the horse opera, those so-called tales of the old west—call 'em what you will—had after all more or less always been in the basement as far as comics are concerned. Oh, sure, the western drama sold well enough, I suppose—or, more importantly, sold steadily, with few peaks and few valleys saleswise (as opposed to various other genres that would often sell well or do poorly depending almost exclusively upon the strength of their covers), thus enabling publishers to initiate relatively realistic print runs and thereby avoid having to warehouse or destroy mass quantities of returned, unsold, unread copies of the comic. Still, the superhero (though he would soon be replaced in the hearts of fandom by quite definitely the strangest character ever to invade the comic book scene, that hero, villain, and victim all rolled into one, generally referred to as "the sympathetic monster") was, especially back in the late sixties, the big deal of the day. Even so, though, I had always possessed (still do possess, as a matter of fact) what many may term an undue amount of affection for the western hero, owing, in the main, to the fact that it was upon the western terrain, upon those "many

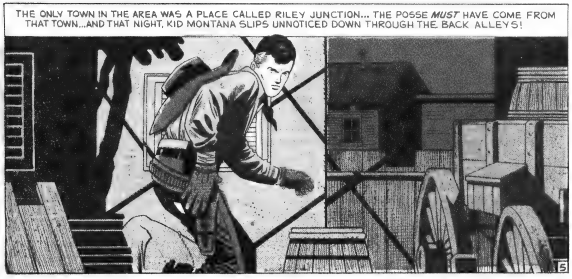
mountain trails that wind through the Rockies and through the Sierra Madres," that I was first able to lay before the general reading public whatever scripting talent I somehow hopefully even still possess—more specifically, writing at Marvel for *Kid Colt, Outlaw* and *Two-Gun Kid*.

Those, though, if you don't mind my saying so, were rather kiddie westerns, especially when compared to the Charlton fare I would subsequently partake of. Though beautifully drawn by the likes of Jack Keller and Dick Ayers, the Marvel "take" on all the various rough-and-tumble sagebrush societal norms, experienced by rannies and owlhoots alike, seemed far more akin to the half-hour live-action black-and-white-in-more-ways-than-one teevee shows I used to catch every Saturday morning while consuming huge bowlfuls of way too sugary cereal back when my years of existence were still measured in single digits (back, that is, in the fifties) than to anything written by (say) Zane Gray, Max Brand, or Louis L'Amour, let alone scripted by Joe Gill, Dave Kaler, Warren Savin, Gary Friedrich, or Sergius O'Shaugnessy. Just consider it, my friends—the Two-Gun Kid even wore a mask and had a secret identity, making him—if you ask me, though I doubt I'm exactly *alone* in owning this particular opinion—far, far too similar to all those other characters in Marvel's stable, that big-deal long-underwear set I spoke of earlier, modern-day fantasy stuff, pure and simple, bearing little (if any) relationship to the realities of what the left side of our country went through some one hundred and fifty years ago. Furthermore, regular readers of the Two-Gun series were actually supposed to simply accept the abject silliness of a mere domino mask somehow preventing the local townsfolk from ever realizing that Matt Hawk and the Two-Gun Kid were actually one and the same! Bah! Feh! Meanwhile, Kid Colt was just that—a kid, seemingly a teen-ager, someone those on the verge of reaching that age themselves (quite obviously the bulk of the audience Marvel was herewithin shooting for) could easily relate to—as compared to Kid Montana, who was graying at the temples yet everyone still called him "kid"; no wonder he was forever a bit pissed-off, more than a modicum of anger smoldering just below the surface.

Hey, wow, look—despite that spate of rather aimless wandering, we have at last worked our way back around to what I originally came here to talk about (albeit as but a preamble to a far more important subject, someone who quite definitely transcended the field in which he had chosen to work, a true and great artist, yet right now we're still merely discussing the Charlton westerns)—entities certainly (for whatever it's worth) far more "adult" than anything Marvel (or anyone else in comics for that matter) had to offer, and not simply because the heroes here were older, but also due to something I was quite definitely happy to see, that comparatively their adventures had a far darker edge going on in there. Kid Montana, Captain Doom, and even the Sharpshooter were themselves bitter, disillusioned, world-weary, aimless wanderers who wanted nothing more than to settle down but somehow




**Centerspread:** Detail of action-packed splash panel to "Apache Ambush," from **Kid Montana** #31, Oct. 1961. **Above:** Kid Montana returns in **Outlaws of the West** #69, May 1968. This issue also featured a nice Pat Boyette true-historical; cover by Rocke Mastroserio. Both images © Charlton Comics Group.


THE ONLY TOWN IN THE AREA WAS A PLACE CALLED RILEY JUNCTION... THE POSSE MUST HAVE COME FROM THAT TOWN...AND THAT NIGHT, KID MONTANA SLIPS UNNOTICED DOWN THROUGH THE BACK ALLEYS!

**Western noir:** A choice Morisi panel from "The Wrong Man," from **Outlaws of the West** #73, Jan. 1969. © Charlton Comics Group.

were never able to pull that one off. Something would always get in their way. Forced to participate in gun duels they had no desire to get into. Accused of crimes they were proximate to but actually played no part in. Whatever. Something that would force them out of one town and on to the next. And then the next. And so on and so forth.

In retrospect—to suddenly narrow my focus just a bit—I realize now that there had always been a certain problem with Captain Doom, one I may have picked up on subconsciously yet back then surely could never have put into words, something which, upon that subconscious level, made my moving on up to Kid Montana even more of a happy event. And that shortcoming can perhaps be best explained by my saying that the Captain simply had *too much* of a back-story. He even wore his Civil War uniform, continually reminding readers that his greatest adventure lay not before him but in the past. Meantime, Kid Montana was definitely in the "now," his past hardly ever mentioned even in passing, giving his character (though he did indeed possess his own distinctive look—that aforementioned graying hair, that ornate hat he always carried yet never seemed to wear) a healthy splash of universality, rather elevating him to that icon status I parenthetically mentioned more than a few paragraphs ago. Though not exactly Everyman, he was, in his own way, at least Every Gunslinger.

But, best of all, concerning my transition from the Captain to the Kid, was the salient reality that this new assignment of mine was to be a package deal. Not only was Charlton bringing back Kid Montana; also returning would be the artist most associated with this character, one Pete Morisi. Don't get me wrong, though—no objections from me as to the way Nicholas and Alascia had handled the art on our Captain Doom stories, no major ones anyway. Certainly, as a still struggling starting-out scripter and rather the low man on the totem pole food-chain-wise, I had no right to object to much of anything, yet that fact alone hardly captures the reality of what was going on here. Oh sure, I had my minor quibbles (which thankfully I quite properly kept to myself), like the rather indiscriminate combining of panels, something which more often than not would sadly vitiate a certain cinematic effect (usually a profusion of quick cuts employing various "camera" angles) I was aiming for, but all in all I more than merely enjoyed the look these two artists (whom unfortunately I never did get to meet face-to-face) gave to the Captain and all those supporting players he'd inevitably meet up with.

Still and all, Pete Morisi did seem to inhabit a higher plane—not merely someone who could draw good comics, more like the sort of Artist you just gotta spell with a capital "A," a true Artist who (for whatever bizarre reason) had chosen comics as the field in which he'd toil. Just look at his art and note how different it is from the usual comic book fare—although certain comparisons have been made (like to the works of the great Alex Toth), this stuff is uniquely Pete's and Pete's alone. Devoid of the usual comic book gimmicks—speed lines, an overuse of foreshortening, the bombastic silliness of characters flying out of the panels, all of that too often being way too much, creating confusion and chaos rather than drama—a Morisi page is deceptively mild and so deceptively simple that at first glance you may well miss the obvious, that each panel prior to the pencil hitting the art board was thoroughly and well thought out with every aspect considered—the layout, the design, the storytelling.

In addition, those double-wide panel borders Pete employed were far from being (as certain lunkheads have suggested) but an affectation; they tended instead to force the reader to consider each panel for what it was: an entity unto itself rather than some seemingly insignificant piece of some huge overblown cacophony (with your eyes not knowing quite where to proceed next, instead one's optical orbs attempting to drink it all in at once and of course failing miserably) like unfortunately most comic book pages (especially today) tend to come off as. Here instead both the design and the storytelling combine to allow the reader to experience the tale in question at whatever pace he wishes to pursue—the whole thing so expertly done (especially the storytelling—with the reader pulled in and allowed to figure out what's happening rather than getting hit over the head with it all) that often, even when Pete was working from one of my own scripts, in the end I would find even my own words to seem rather unneeded, downright superfluous.

It became a challenge, then—to write something worthy of what Morisi could do with it, to craft dialog and captions that would neither come off as unnecessary nor just plain sound silly alongside that wondrous art. Brimming with eager earnest hunger, I of course quickly swooped up the gauntlet, yet whether or not I properly rose to the challenge is surely something someone other than I must judge. All I can say is, I began to experiment—rather wildly at times—attempting to stumble upon the sort of script that would stand as the perfect companion for the artwork it would subsequently be graced with. I wrote western ghost stories, western mysteries, weird morality plays, my scripts growing more and more focused as I dug down ever deeper, past that stoic veneer and into Kid Montana's twisted, tortured soul.

One of my favorites along these lines was entitled "The Wrong Man." Like all our Kid Montana yarns, it was a mere

nine-pager appearing in *Outlaws of the West*, in this particular case issue #73, Jan. 1969. This was one of those accused-of-a-crime-he-didn't-commit stories, wherein the Kid thinks he knows who actually did what he (our hero) is being blamed for (i.e., shoot an unsuspecting individual in the back for reasons purposely never delved into). Turns out, however, that Montana is mistaken; someone else (a third party) did the deed, making for the title here referring not only to the Kid himself but also to the man our hero has been trying to get the goods on. But, enough already about the plot—it wasn't particularly any great shakes. Besides, it's almost exclusively the look of this baby that places this particular gem up toward the top of my list. I mean, talk about stumbling onto something! Seems, you see, that the last half of this tale takes place within a small western town in the middle of the night (with Montana creeping around the back alleys, trying to clear himself by catching the real killer, etc.), yet in choosing that time and place I had no idea I'd be setting the scene for the nearly unbelievable, for Pete's artwork to incredibly shine even brighter than it usually did. First of all, the Charlton coloring, which even most diehard Charlton fans willingly concede always came off as a little weird, seemed somehow decidedly less so when mainly merely the darker tones were employed. More importantly, though, this setting gave Pete ample opportunity to play around with light and shadow, devising strangely angled patches of light with even stranger shadows within them, like something straight out of film noir. Hey, a western murder mystery with film noir flavoring—what's not to love about that?

One specific memory I have of working with Morisi, dating back to before I even met the man, necessitates for better understanding that the reader (and that means you) be made aware of the fact that Pete (who lettered the Montana series himself) was forever making changes vis-à-vis the words I'd employ, something which, when other artists did so, had an understandable tendency to get me supremely steamed. However, believe it or not, in this particular case I really didn't mind much at all. The thing is, Morisi had been connected with this series far longer than I had, and I figured that gave him the right to take certain liberties. Besides, these particular yarns never had any credits on 'em anyway. Furthermore, just about every change Pete would make to my scripts was designed to brighten things up a bit, and seeing as I was, at that time, still in my early twenties, still filled with all sorts of residual teenage angst and rage, given (in my spare time) to spewing forth "poetry" that was similar to (but nowhere near as good as) the worst of Jim Morrison, and imbued with the youthful (or should I say "childish"?) tendency to overdo everything I did, turning down the darkness a couple of notches never exactly seemed (even to me) like a bad idea at all.

Still, my tacit approval of Pete's efforts rewriting-wise did place my backside squarely upon a proverbial pile of pins and needles from the time I turned in my script for a certain Kid Montana tale entitled "One Man's Death" until the finished product finally saw print (in *Outlaws of the West* #74, Mar. 1969) for fear that in reweaving that yarn Pete would give the Kid some dialog and thereby totally ruin the effect I was shooting for—a tale in which the main character doesn't utter a single word. Nor does he possess a single thought balloon. Instead, in this particular instance, the emphasis is upon the wandering gunslinger's outsider status. All the other characters in the story know each other, whereas the Kid may be involved in the proceedings yet has no vested interest in anything that's happening. Furthermore, how he views what's transpiring is unavailable to the reader. The idea of course, beyond merely making Montana a silent, enigmatic, foreboding presence, was to allow the reader to view him as surely the residents of the various towns he'd wander into must have seen him. My one cinematic reference when I think back upon this story is the character played by Lee Van Cleef in *High Noon*.

WHILE, BACK IN TOWN, YOUNG NICK COWLEY WAS STAYING ALERT!
HMM... REYNOLDS HAS STRUCK UP A CONVERSATION WITH THAT GUNFIGHTER IN THE GENERAL STORE! AND IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'VE MADE SOME SORT OF DEAL!
SECONDS LATER, REYNOLDS AND THE MONTANA KID LEFT THE STORE, HEADING FOR THEIR HORSES!
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THIS! REYNOLDS IS UP TUH SOMETHIN'! AND I AIM TUH FIND OUT JES' WHAT IT IS!
THEY'RE HEADING OUTTA TOWN! I'LL LET THEM GET A GOOD LEAD, THEN TAIL 'EM FROM A SAFE DISTANCE! I WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING REYNOLDS DOES... FROM HERE ON IN!
SOMETIME LATER... MILES FROM TOWN!
SO -- THEY'RE HEADED FOR REYNOLD'S RANCH!
NO, WAIT, THEY'RE STOPPING SHORT OF THE PLACE! AND THE GUNSLINGER'S GETTIN' OFF HIS MOUNT!
REYNOLDS OWNED A SMALL SPREAD JUST OUTSIDE OF TOWN! BACK WHEN HIS FATHER WAS STILL ALIVE IT WAS A PROSPEROUS RANCH, BUT NOW IT WASN'T EVEN STOCKED WITH BEEF FOR REYNOLDS HAD NO INTEREST IN RUNNING A RANCH! HE PREFERRED TO SPEND MOST OF HIS TIME IN TOWN-- GAMBLING, DRINKING, AND PARTICIPATING IN SHOOT-OUTS!
REYNOLDS IS STILL ON HIS WAY TO THE RANCH, BUT WHAT'S THAT GUNSLICK UP TO?
CONTINUED AFTER FOLLOWING PAGE

Page from "One Man's Death," from **Outlaws of the West** #74, Mar. 1969. © Charlton Comics Group.

**OF COURSE, ONCE I ACTUALLY** met Pete (at one of those rather laid-back, extremely interesting chit-chat-wise, and mainly just plain fun Christmas parties Charlton used to throw back in the day) I immediately realized how utterly silly my fears had been. Here was a man, heavyset, friendly, quick to smile, even seemingly somewhat bemused, who was (it didn't take long at all to pick up on this) intelligent, thoughtful, and respectful—was this guy really (dayjobwise) a cop? After but a few preliminary exchanges, it became indelibly obvious that he had surely quickly seen what I was up to in "One Man's Death," had respected it and had gone with it. I have no doubt that, as an artist, he had quite a bit of an ego, yet (unlike so many of the other artists I'd dealt with) certainly not the sort of ego that would allow him to destroy an idea, a concept, an effect that someone else was attempting to put out there into the hands of the public.

He was also forthcoming and forthright, unassuming and unaffected in a definitely down-to-earth and even slightly self-effacing manner. I had—just to give you an example of where I'm coming from with this nearly forty-year-old observation of mine—developed this rather highfalutin English-major-type theory concerning the names Pete had chosen for the characters in another of his series, his major foray into the wonderful world of superheroics, a little something called *Peter Cannon . . . Thunderbolt*. More specifically, I was interested in the surname he had bestowed upon the hero of this series as well as the only name his hero's Himalayan sidekick seemed to possess, Tabu. The theory—well now, especially considering that Cannon had been raised in a monastery, could it not perhaps be that Morisi was punning around here, purposely evoking "canons" and "taboos" as rather the yin and the yang of virtually any belief system, be it Eastern, Western, or what-have-you? Surely, the super-suit Thunderbolt wore, split right down the middle (red and blue on one side, blue and red on the other) could be construed as representing the yin and the yang, so why not the characters' names as well? In any event, when I confronted Pete with all of this, I of course received as my answer a rather resounding "Nahh!"—whereupon Pete pointed out that in the case of Peter Cannon, he had simply been searching around for a heroic and macho-sounding name to give to his hero, had somehow zeroed in upon that rather ancient (even back then) TV detective Peter Gunn, and had adroitly decided to fashion his own character's name after that dude's, while simultaneously upping the ante (as it were), naming his hero after a much larger weapon than a mere gun.

Strangely enough, during our quite lengthy discussion there over drinks and munchies (and, as I recall, quite a spread it was), neither of us even once mentioned Kid Montana. I like to think that Pete's reluctance to bring up this character was similar to my own—that we had a good thing going there, that somehow our approaches came together quite nicely, and discussing it, intellectualizing it, might somehow hurt the synergy we had neatly set into motion. I'm sure most writers and artists can readily understand where I'm coming from here—the way the intellectualizing process, mere words in and of themselves, can lock you into someplace you really shouldn't be, force you down trails you'd do better to avoid. Better, all in all, to give the creative juices free rein, allow them to flow where they wanna flow.

What we did discuss was *Thunderbolt*, a series Pete not only drew but wrote as well. And, when it comes to Pete's writing, this is where I go all gushy, lose whatever already tenuous grip I have upon objectivity, and enter the realm of being what is generally referred to as a fanboy. In short, I love

A pair of issues from Morisi's written-and-drawn run of **Kid Montana:** #32, Dec. 1961 (British edition), and #36, Sept. 1962. Judging from the latter, the Kid's western landscape must have included quite a bit more unexplored territory than that of most other gunfighters!
Scans courtesy of Frank Motler. © Charlton Comics Group.

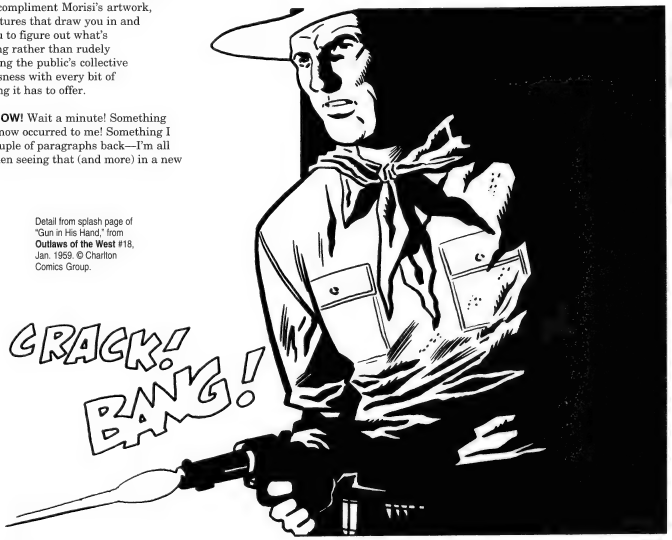
that stuff—the way Pete would creep up on a subject, seemingly circle around it, describe it, tell us how it functions or how it feels, and then, finally, via the use of a "that is" or some such similar phrase, reveal to us just exactly what the heck he's been talking about anyway. Certainly, in a number of ways, Morisi's scripting takes a bit of getting used to. Not being a trained writer, he has a tendency to use "it's" when he means "its," and he often seasons his captions with more commas than most authors use in an entire book. A bit of hyperbole there, but really not much of one—fact is, our bossman, Dick Giordano, would take out well over half the commas Pete would employ and often wish he had taken out even more. However, since Dick did so in the proofreading rather than the copyediting, the reader can still see where those commas had been. If there seems to be an extra-large space between two words, you can be sure one of those pollywog-shaped punctuation marks originally occupied that space. One can even (with a pencil or a pen or preferably merely mentally) put those commas back in, if one has a mind to. That, in fact, is what I like to do, mainly because once you realize they're not there for grammar's sake, that they're much more meant as merely dramatic pauses, then even the ones between the subject and the predicate (a definite grammatical no-no) seem to work just fine. No, better than fine, more like beautifully—the way they slow things down and thereby compliment Morisi's artwork, those pictures that draw you in and allow you to figure out what's happening rather than rudely pummeling the public's collective consciousness with every bit of everything it has to offer.

**WHOA NOW!** Wait a minute! Something has just now occurred to me! Something I said a couple of paragraphs back—I'm all of a sudden seeing that (and more) in a new and brighter light, almost as though Pete has once again rewritten my words and let a bit more of the sun shine in. That is to say, what was I thinking way-back-when? That bit about constructing a script that would stand as the perfect companion to Morisi's artwork—was not that all (as I now at last realize) but one huge chunk of juvenile chutzpah and hubris, a desire for immortality bursting forth from a youthful and insecure author's ego grown large enough to possess its own zip code? Did I honestly think I could do Pete himself one better? Did I somehow not realize that the perfect accompaniment to Pete's artwork already existed? And it still does exist! And you—yes, you—can avail yourself of it! So get up now, go out there, haunt those comic book shops, rummage through those back-issue boxes while perhaps saying to yourself "I can do it . . . I must do it . . . I will do it!"—yes, do that, and keep at it until you find—actually, blissfully find—those 1966 and 1967 editions of *Thunderbolt* (or those 1977 and 1978 Modern Comics reprints), then go home, grab a brew, settle back, mentally put those commas back in, and enjoy these deceptively mild, smoothly paced, thoughtful and thrilling artistic comic book masterpieces to the hilt.

That's what I plan to do.

Right now.

*© 2005 Steve Skeates*




Detail from splash page of "Gun in His Hand," from **Outlaws of the West** #18, Jan. 1959. © Charlton Comics Group.

# THE EXPLOSIVE WORLD OF Johnny DYNAMITE

by **Mark Burbey**

**DYNAMITE BELIEVED** in an eye-for-an-eye brand of justice. God help those who tried to kill Johnny Dynamite—or killed someone he cared about. Their demise went straigh to the top of a bloodstained to-do list. If he wasn't armed when he found them, his bare hands would do just fine.

**PETE MORISI WAS A UNIQUE ARTIST** with an immediately recognizable style, and he's best remembered for creating, writing, and drawing *Thunderbolt* during Charlton Comics' action-hero heyday in the 1960s.

*Thunderbolt* didn't generate sufficient sales to live beyond eleven issues (eight of which were written and drawn by Morisi), but many fans continue to maintain a warm spot for the character in their comic collections. When *Thunderbolt* debuted, many of these fans were unaware of Morisi's work, or knew it only from the western comics he had been doing for Charlton. Even more were unaware of a character Morisi had created only a decade before—Johnny Dynamite, private eye, aka the Wild Man from Chicago.

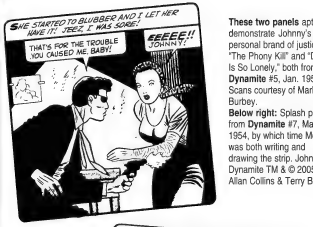
The early to mid-1950s was the era of classic pre-Code comics, the mere mention of which conjures memories of graphically violent crime comics, so-called "good girl" comics, odd subgroups like "injury to the eye" comics, and, of course, EC's brilliantly extreme horror and crime comics. Sales of these comics warranted pushing the envelope ever further, with publishers in a seeming contest to out-gore each other. Treading water in this ocean of extreme comics was a line of books published by Comic Media, including *Horrific*, *Weird Terror*, *Death Valley*, and *Danger*. Comic Media also published a book called *Dynamite*, which became the home of Johnny Dynamite with the third issue. Despite the tenor of the times, the Johnny Dynamite stories, instead of pushing the envelope, told solid crime tales that appealed to a mature audience.

In an article published in *Charlton Spotlight* #3, Ron Frantz quoted correspondence with Pete Morisi about the creation of Johnny Dynamite. "Johnny Dynamite evolved from an adventure-type comic book that wasn't selling," Morisi wrote. "The book was called *Dynamite*, and due to some postal regulations the publisher (Allen Hardy) had to continue with that title. He wanted to revamp it badly and asked me for suggestions. I said: Well, Mickey Spillane and his 'Mike Hammer' pocket books are the rage right now. Why not go with the trend in a comic book called *Johnny Dynamite*? He agreed, and the book did quite well for about 8 or 9 issues until Hardy ran into trouble with his other titles—and went out of business."

The trouble that Allen Hardy and Comic Media ran into was typical of that encountered by many comic book publishers of the period: shrinking sales. Michael Feldman, who has been working on what he hopes will be the definitive history of the comic book industry, said, "All low end publishing was in a downswing from 1953 into the late '50s. TV was encroaching, buying tastes changing, movement to the suburbs, a huge glut on newsstands—all caused tremendous shifts in buying patterns. Retailers wanted more 25-cent paperbacks and magazines and less 10-cent comic books."

If that wasn't enough, a child psychologist named Dr. Fredric Wertham had authored a series of books—*Dark Legend* (1941), *The Show of Violence* (1948), and *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954)—all of which condemned popular culture (comic books in particular) as the seed that was allegedly turning our children into murderous delinquents. Other authors joined the chorus of derision and vilification with equally condemning tomes, joined by wails of protest from church and community groups. Senate hearings held in 1954 finally crushed the comics industry like a bug, driving many publishers out of business and leaving those that remained little choice but to submit to the restrictive and lobotomizing Comics Code Authority.

"The Wertham thing was icing on the cake," Feldman said. "Comics quickly became a nonessential like their older sister the pulp magazines." Diversification became the order of the day as companies like "Dell, Fawcett, Ace and others moved into paperbacks, men's sweat mags, scandal magazines,




**These two panels** aptly demonstrate Johnny's personal brand of justice: "The Phony Kill" and "Death Is So Lonely," both from **Dynamite** #5, Jan. 1954. Scans courtesy of Mark Burbey.

**Below right:** Splash page from **Dynamite** #7, May 1954, by which time Morisi was both writing and drawing the strip. Johnny Dynamite TM & © 2005 Max Allan Collins & Terry Beatty.

HATE SEEMED TO FILL MY BODY. THERE WAS NO THOUGHT, OR REASON BEHIND MY MOVEMENTS. THEN...
ONLY THE LUST TO KILL SMILED!
I'D CALL CRAZY... KEEP AWAY FROM TREE. GIMME A BREAK!!

**Background, left:** Johnny, still with both eyes, in his first appearance on the cover of Comic Media's **Dynamite** #3, Sep. 1953.

*Playboy* imitations, etc. They did better than ever. Publishers were dumping their comic lines and selling off anything they could for some quick cash. Charlton was one of the few buyers."

This is how Johnny Dynamite ended up at Charlton, but Dynamite was in best form during his seven-issue run in Comic Media's *Dynamite* #3–9 (1953–54). Max Allan Collins—creator and writer of Ms. Tree, the Mike Hammer comic book series, *Road to Perdition*, and many crime novels—brought Johnny Dynamite back into collector awareness when he and artist Terry Beatty reprinted these classic tales as a backup feature in *Ms. Tree* in the 1980s. "Private eyes have always been fairly uncommon in comics," Max said recently, "so when I stumbled on Morisi's Johnny Dynamite, I was blown away—not just by his artwork, which was dynamic and nicely Caniff-school—because Johnny Dynamite was a full-blown, shameless, outrageous Mike Hammer rip-off. It's at least as good as Spillane's own Mike Hammer comic strip—tough, driven by revenge, and very sexy for its time."

Rip-off might seem like a strong word, but consider this: The cast of Mike Hammer included his dark-haired soulmate of a secretary, Velda, and police captain Pat Chambers of the New York Police Department, while Johnny Dynamite's world included virginal secretary Judy Kane and homicide detective Luke Hennessy. The protagonists in the Hammer novels and the Dynamite comics were often duplicitous females; it was a woman who cost Johnny an eye in a botched murder attempt. Both Hammer and Dynamite worked many of their cases free of charge in the name of justice or vengeance or both. Whether rip-off or homage, Johnny Dynamite was shaded with the same patina of hard-boiled emotion and portrayed as "the rough, tough private detective who's as explosive as his name." In a landscape littered with prostitution, drugs, and racketeering, Dynamite, like Hammer, sought to wash a modicum of the scum off the streets, but that usually came at a price. The innocent often paid dearly. Women often threw themselves at Johnny, some out of gratitude, some with ulterior motives, and many died before the night was out. With no pun intended, Dynamite believed in an eye-for-an-eye brand of justice. God help those who tried to kill Johnny Dynamite—or killed someone he cared about. Their demise went straight to the top of a bloodstained to-do list. If he wasn't armed when he found them, his bare hands would do just fine.

The art of Pete Morisi—who had already done crime stories for comics like Lev Gleason's *Crime Does Not Pay*—was instrumental in the effectiveness of these stories. There's an understated quality about his work that doesn't overwhelm the story it's telling. Further, his eye for design and placement of blacks was ideal for the noir mood required in a good crime story. The evolution of his style can be attributed to the popularity and influence of Milton Caniff. Morisi attended the

JOHNNY DYNAMITE
THE WILD MAN FROM CHICAGO
"I WATCHED HELPLESSLY AS THE GUY WITH THE SHIV DID SOMETHING TERRIBLE TO HER FACE. HER ALMOST-NAKED BODY CONVULSED UNDER THE AGONY OF IT. FORCING OUT THE HURT SOUNDS IN A FRENZIED SOB. THE GUY WITH THE SHIV AND THE TWO HOODS WITH HIM WOULD DIE. I WOULD SEE TO THAT. THEN I'D FIND THE BIG BOY BEHIND THIS. SLOWLY AND REAL. HE WOULD DIE TOO! ONLY SLOWER AND MUCH SLOWER!
"YOU'RE FAST WITH A GUN, JOHNNY. BUT EVEN FASTER WHEN YOU KILL. BUT YOU'RE DEALING WITH BIG TIME STUFF. THEY'LL BE GLAD TO GIVE YOUR FACE TO JOHNNY DYNAMITE TO WORK OVER. WARNINGS DO NOT TAKE. JOHNNY HAS FOUND THAT THERE WOULD BE NO CORPSES ACCOUNTED FOR BEFORE HE HAS THROUGH. HE WOULD RETURN HIS WORD. FOR JOHNNY HAS DETERMINED TO CARRY OUT HIS OWN PERSONAL...
VENDETTA
STORY AND ART
PETE MORISI

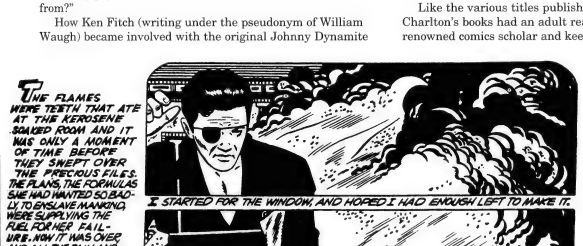
School of Industrial Arts in Manhattan and was a classmate of Alex Toth. The influence of Caniff can be seen in the work of both artists, but Morisi attributes much of his style to his admiration of George Tuska, with whom he once shared a studio. In an interview with Morisi in *Comic Book Artist* #9 (Aug. 2000), he addressed a story that he once offered to pay Tuska for using his style. "I grew up enjoying Tuska's art," Morisi said. "So, when the time came for me to step into comics, I thought it was only fair to ask his permission to work in his style. I asked, and he said, 'Okay.' That was it. There was never any payment or fees. Where do stories like that come from?"

How Ken Fitch (writing under the pseudonym of William Waugh) became involved with the original Johnny Dynamite found a niche in romance, crime, and horror comics. The complex nonfantasy stories obviously were geared for an older readership."

I WAS JAMMED IN AT A RED TRAFFIC LIGHT WHEN I SAW THE DISH STROKING TOWARD ME...
WITH HALF THE CITY ON THE SIDEWALK SHE PICKS ME FOR A CAMERA SHOT!
HOLD THAT POSE MISTER!
UH-UH! NOT IF I CAN JOCKEY THIS CRATE INTO THE HOLE UP AHEAD!
DODGE
FERRY'S
I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE SOMEKIND OF A SHAKEDOWN BUT EVEN I DIDN'T EXPECT WHAT WAS COMING!
AIIIYYYY! # ?! MY EYE! MY EYE!

**Left:** Johnny loses one in "An Eye for an Eye," from **Dynamite** #4, Nov. 1953. **Middle:** Johnny turns up the heat. We're frankly not sure which issue this is from; maybe we should hire a detective. **Below:** Johnny's bare hands work just fine in "Death Is So Lonely," from **Dynamite** #5, Jan. 1954. Scans courtesy of Mark Burbey. Johnny Dynamite TM & © 2005 Max Allan Collins & Terry Beatty.

Like the various titles published by Comic Media, Charlton's books had an adult readership as well. Jerry Bails, renowned comics scholar and keeper of the *Who's Who of 20th-Century American Comic Books*, said that, in the postwar years, "Charlton comics were distributed and sold primarily through chains that sold material to adult men. The fullest array of Charlton Comics was always available in downtown cigar and magazine stories in Kansas City along with nudist magazines, packets of soft porn, and other men's adventure magazines."


THE FLAMES WERE TEETH THAT ATE AT THE KEROSENE SOAKED ROOM AND IT WAS ONLY A MOMENT OR TIME BEFORE THEY SWEPT OVER THE PRECIOUS FILES. THE PLANS, THE FORMULAS SHE HAD HUNTED SO BADLY, TO EXPLOSIVE MANKIND, WERE SUPPLYING THE FUEL FOR HER FAILURE. NOW IT WAS OVER AND ALL THE PAIN AND FEVER THAT THE HATRED HAD SUBDUED, BEGAN TO THROB WITHIN ME.
I STARTED FOR THE WINDOW, AND HOPED I HAD ENOUGH LEFT TO MAKE IT.
THE END

The final issue of Comic Media's *Dynamite* (#9) was cover-dated September 1954, and the first issue of Charlton's *Johnny Dynamite* (#10) was dated June 1955. According to Michael Feldman, "Charlton bought out failing companies and properties in 1953–55. *Johnny Dynamite* was a title taken over from Comic Media, who dropped their line in 1954. Charlton had an all-in-one operation of printing, publishing, and distribution. As long as it was legal (and not always) they didn't care what rolled off their presses, filled their trucks, or ended up on the stands. It would be giving too much credit to Charlton to say they ever thought much about stories is difficult to say, but as one of the most prolific script writers in the history of comics, he was as instrumental as Morisi in setting the tone for the series. Some of the stories lack credits, but by *Dynamite* #7, Morisi was writing many, if not all, of the stories. Of the original Johnny Dynamite stories published by Comic Media, not a single one fails to draw the reader into a whirlpool of brutality and deceit. With the claustrophobic tension of a tightening noose, Morisi and Fitch achieved in stories averaging ten pages in length what Spillane achieved over the span of a novel. As such, one can't read a Johnny Dynamite story without wondering who the audience was. Surely these comics, with their numerous sex scenes, brutal murders, and drug references, couldn't have been intended for children. So who *was* reading them? Michael Feldman said that "comics, to some extent, replaced pulp magazines as a quick impulse newsstand fix for casual adult purchases. After the war this readership was more actively cultivated. By the '50s it's acknowledged that there was a significant adult readership, maybe as high as 25 percent. Many of them were people who grew up reading comics and never stopped. Many companies

ME SCREAMED AND BEGGED FOR MERCY, YOMME, A BREAK! HE SPED YEAH... HED GET A BREAK, I BENT HIS HEAD BACK UNTIL...
GURG...
OH, JOHNNY, W-HOLD ME W-HINK... ARMS... PLEASE...
TAKE IT SLOW, LAURIE ...I'VE GOT YOU...
I'M NOT A GOOD GIRL, JOHNNY. I GOT WHERE I DID WITH CHANNAUGH FOR NOT BEING GOOD, BUT JOHNNY, I DON'T WANT TO DIE. DEATH IS SO LONELY! AND I'VE BEEN LONELY ALL MY LIFE, UNTIL YOU

their audience, marketing, etc. If it sold enough it was good."

Feldman went on to say that "Charlton had many out of work creators coming to them for freelance assignments. They were fortunate in that Pete Morisi was one of them. He stayed with them for decades despite their reduction of rates after the 1955 flood. I would classify the quality of *Johnny Dynamite* as a fortunate accident. The right talent in the right place with a publisher who let them do what they wanted."

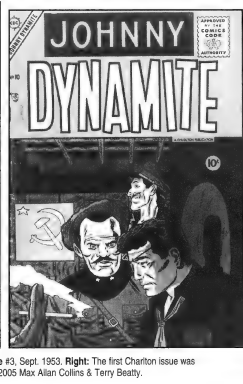
The final Johnny Dynamite story by Morisi—"Poison Jasmine" (*Johnny Dynamite* #11, Aug. 1955)—wasn't a Dynamite story at all, but likely inventory material intended for Comic Media's *Danger* #12 (the title ended with #11). In the *Comic Book Artist* interview, Morisi explained that "Comic Media had a spy-type character in one of their books called 'Duke Douglas.' When Charlton bought that title (along with my Johnny Dynamite character), they needed a fill-in story for the *Dynamite* book, so they added an eye-patch onto Duke Douglas and called him Johnny Dynamite." If nothing else, the checkered vest worn by Duke Douglas, in the jungle no less, should have tipped readers off that this wasn't the genuine article.

Charlton's *Johnny Dynamite* title, now under the jurisdiction of the Comics Code Authority, ran for only three issues, ending with #12 (Oct. 1955). The last stories featuring the character were drawn by a series of unidentified artists, possibly including the Charles Nicholas–Vincent Alascia team, Joe Shuster, and Bill Molno. Despite being interesting character sketches, these stories were a faint echo of those that preceded them. Without the talent and passion of the original creators, Johnny Dynamite was just another guy in another crime comic. It is Feldman's view that "Charlton simply didn't care what they put out. Charlton was in expansion mode unlike any other comic publisher in 1955. Quite frankly, they might have been the only publisher who would put out *Johnny Dynamite* in 1955 because it didn't matter to them—it was another product. Unfortunately a major flood that literally submerged their plant in Connecticut in August of that year resulted in a drastic rate reduction and diminishment of quality in their product."

Judging from the cover dates, it was doubtlessly the flood that killed the *Johnny Dynamite* title. Charlton revived the character for one last time, in a comic titled *Foreign Intrigues*, starting with issue #14 (Mar. 1956) and ending with #15 (Aug. 1956). It is suspected that #13 doesn't exist, and the title was changed to *Battlefield Action* with issue #16.

And so Johnny would have gone out with the proverbial whimper had Collins and Beatty not reprinted the best of Morisi's Johnny Dynamite stories (along with a few non-JD tales) in the pages of *Ms. Tree* #36 through #49 and *Ms. Tree's 1950's 3-D Crime #1*. Collins and Beatty were so enamored with the character that they resurrected him for a four-issue mini-series of their own titled "Underworld," published by Dark Horse Comics in 1994 and later collected in a single volume by AiT/Planet Lar in 2003.

THIS IS JOHNNY DYNAMITE
DYNAMITE
10¢
MEET JOHNNY DYNAMITE
THE WILD MAN FROM CHICAGO... THRILLING ADVENTURES WITH A REPORTER AS HIS NAME...
COMIC MEDIA
DUKE DOUGLAS
THEN ONE DAY, RICKEY MA... HE DOES IT BACK... IN SPANISH!



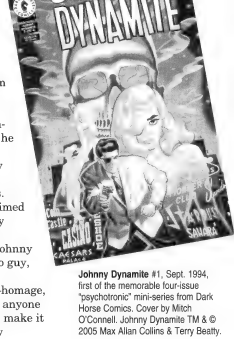

**Above left:** Johnny was introduced in Comic Media's **Dynamite** #3, Sept. 1953. **Right:** The first Charlton issue was **Johnny Dynamite** #10, June 1955. Johnny Dynamite TM & © 2005 Max Allan Collins & Terry Beatty.

Rather than walking Johnny through his usual steps, Collins and Beatty took him in a direction that included Satan as a cast member. "Terry and I had been kicking around doing a 'psychotronic' comic book for some time—in particular, doing a hard-boiled kind of character (not necessarily a P.I.) in a '50s setting, merging noir with McCarthy-era s-f. The idea came to be 'Mickey Spillane meets George Romero.' From that, we thought, well—we own Johnny Dynamite. Why not use him? It then has the added cachet of being a revival of a classic character. But the concept of the '50s tough guy bouncing up against zombies and flying saucers and so on, that was quite apart from Johnny Dynamite."

Collins has written a Johnny Dynamite screenplay, and in March 2005 he said, "One production company asked to see my screenplay, and another inquired about TV rights. *Road to Perdition* has primed that pump, obviously. My screenplay, incidentally, reinvents the feature—Johnny is modern-day but a retro guy, and lives in Vegas."

So Morisi's creation—homage, whatever—lives on. And anyone who thought he wouldn't make it this far just doesn't know Johnny.

*© 2005 Mark Burbey*




**Johnny Dynamite** #1, Sept. 1994, first of the memorable four-issue "psychotronic" mini-series from Dark Horse Comics. Cover by Mitch O'Connell. Johnny Dynamite TM & © 2005 Max Allan Collins & Terry Beatty.

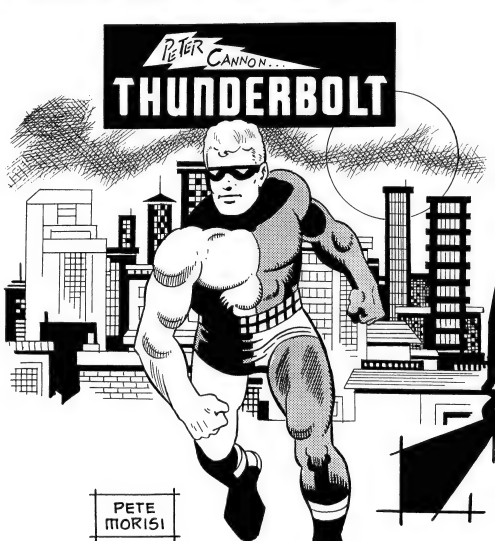
# *Pete Morisi . . .*
# COMIC BOOK ARTIST

## *by* Glen Johnson

**I CORRESPONDED** with Pete Morisi from 1964 until his death. I still have his last letter, from March 7, 2003. It will never be answered.

Pete was very opinionated and very unhappy about how comics had changed. He loved working in comics and wanted only to draw pictures and tell stories for people to read. He was most happy when he could write, pencil, and ink the whole thing. His philosophy was, "Tell me what you want and let me do it." He didn't really mind if he couldn't write the story, but he wanted to both pencil and ink it. He wasn't interested in inking someone else's pencils and he didn't want anyone inking his. He had done both in the past but was never happy with the results. He felt bad that there wasn't a place for him to apply his craft after Charlton closed its doors to new work, but he didn't want to bend to the change, especially at DC, where he could have found all the work he wanted as an inker. If he couldn't do both, he would sit it out.

After Thunderbolt was dropped from the Charlton lineup in 1967, Pete started to develop a private-eye character. "I may be starting a private eye type strip soon. In fact, it's pretty certain . . . writing and drawing. More details later on. I hope a different subject matter, and shorter stories will allow me to meet some deadlines. The strip I'm working on is a private eye thing in name only. It's sort of a combined detective and adventure character that I've named 'Pete Savage . . . For Hire.' It'll be something like Lou Fine's Peter Scratch . . . only more bizarre. I'm in the hair-pulling stage with it now. . . . 'Pete Savage . . . For Hire' will have to wait a while. I've got a 'Man Called Loco' strip to do first. Re: Savage and cigarettes, Dick [Giordano] said, 'Ease off, have a few smoking scenes, but don't overdo it . . . you know—the Code!'




Of this undated and possibly unpublished illustration of T-Bolt by Pete Morisi, Glen says, "I think this drawing was for a relative of Pete's. He sent me a copy of it." From a copy of the original art, courtesy of Glen. Thunderbolt TM & © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi.

"Now I'm back to 'Pete Savage . . . For Hire' and my normal hair-pulling routine. Still no story at this point—just spots and pieces that have to be kicked mentally into place. . . . Pete Savage is a struggle, every word of it—rougher than T-bolt, which I thought was the peak in frustration. So far I've developed him in three different ways, and I'm not happy—so after this letter, I start on number four!

"I don't want Pete Savage to be like Dynamite—that was too 'gutsy,' and would never get past the Code. I want something on the order of Lou Fine's Pete Scratch. (He's going to

look like him—with blond hair) only I want better plots. Fine developed a good character—but the stories were sad. I hope Pete Savage doesn't wind up the same way!

"Pete Savage is still giving me headaches, so Dick was kind enough to revise the schedule for a later 'Charlton Premiere' title that it will appear in. If it clicks—mail reaction—it'll go in its own book. At least, that's my understanding with Dick."

Giordano left Charlton and Sal Gentile became editor. "The Pete Savage thing has been dropped . . . at least for now . . . while Gentile makes up his mind as to what kind of books he wants to go with! Since Pete Savage is 'up in the air'—I've thrown out all scripts. I wasn't happy with them. If I get the okay—I'll start again. Maybe I can put a script together that 'feels' right—like some of the T-bolt things."

A real shame regarding Pete's artwork was that he was always pushed for time. He was always writing me about being rushed to finish a job, and he complained that he was never allowed to devote extra time to details. He wanted to do a job for Warren but kept putting this off until he retired from the police force. When he retired and had the time, Warren had closed shop and even Charlton was out of the business. DC didn't seem interested and his eyesight gave him problems at an early age. I once wrote him about sending him extra copies of the 1950s Superior Comics he did, and his response was—"No, no, no, I don't want any Superior stories reprints—burn it—or blame it on Tuska. *The Invisible Man* was probably the 'best' of the jobs I did for Superior, but most of the stuff was rush, rush, rush and looks it."

**ALTHOUGH PETE LIVED** close to Manhattan, he attended very few comic conventions. One reason being he didn't feel he had much of a fan following, a real mistake on his part. Another was that as a New York City policeman he wasn't supposed to moonlight and was worried about his secret getting out. Once at a meeting of comic professionals, Stan Lee recognized Pete across the room and called out, "Pete, how goes the cop business?" This worried Pete and sort of cut down on the number of events he attended. But from a July 7, 1972, letter, you could tell he had a great time at the Phil Seuling New York Con and it makes me wonder why he didn't attend more conventions after he retired from the force. Here's the letter he wrote me in its entirety:

"I had a ball at the convention and don't know where to begin telling you about it, so, I'll start at the beginning. I got there about 11:00 a.m. (July 3) and looked around at the comics tables and Jack Kirby exhibit room. Fabulous Kirby stuff, pencils, inks, old stuff, new stuff. Each piece of work better than the next.

"After that, we (my #1 son Steven came along) went up to Toth's room to say hello, and we hit it off right away. Aside from both of us having corporations up front, and a few specks of grey hair, we still talk the same language, and we didn't split with Alex until he left the convention about 7:00.

"We did break up for an hour or so, during the luncheon, when Alex sat up on the dais with Kirby, Seuling, and Steranko. Steven and I grabbed a seat at a semi-empty table near the dais. As fate would have it, Sol Harrison was seated there too. Also, as fate would have it, a couple and child (about 12 or 13 yrs. old) took up the remaining seats at the table just as the luncheon began—Mr. and Mrs. George Wildman and son. Crazy, isn't it? I couldn't have planned it better. George and family are all sweethearts—real nice people. We got through lunch and presentations of plaques to Kirby and Toth when Sol asked me to a little DC party (booze and snacks) that was being held in a small room later that evening. I told him OK, and rejoined George Wildman and we were joined in turn by Mr. and Mrs. Sal Gentile. It seems that Sal came to the con-vention to see Toth about a slick magazine western cover he contracted Toth to do in color, for Charlton. (Naturally, Sal can pay more for slick covers than he did for comics.) So Toth, Sal, myself, Steven, and the Wildmans all went for a drink and were joined by Steranko and Jerry DeFuccio (*Mad* Mag) and talked for an hour or so.

Pete and Louise Morisi in 1962, shortly before Pete and Glen began their long correspondence. Photo courtesy of Val and Russ Morisi; © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi.

"Then it was back to Toth's room for Sal, Alex, and myself, where Sal and Alex finalized their deal. Sal left, after offering me the comics editorship of Charlton again—he's pretty sure that Wildman will be kicked 'upstairs' soon.

"Finally Toth, Steven, and myself got him packed, went for coffee and said goodbye to Alex as he left for Long Island to visit his sister before returning to California.

"Then before Steven and I headed for home, we decided to stop in on the DC party and Sol Harrison. After a couple of drinks Sol came over to me and said, 'If you have any free time on your hands, Pete—I'd like you to do work for me.' I said, 'Thanx, but how can you offer me work without knowing my stuff?' He said, 'I know your stuff.' And I replied, 'I work without a deadline—if you can offer me that kind of deal, maybe.' And he said, 'I think we can work something out.' At which point I said thanx again and that I'd be in touch with him. Then Steven and I went home.

"My answer to Charlton has to be no again, damn it, and my reaction to Sol's offer is also more no than yes.

"Your question about why isn't DC putting out Captain Marvel will now be answered. Sol said that they're planning to put out a book call 'Shazam' featuring the real Captain Marvel—Billy Batson and all. Great news, isn't it?

"During the con I met and spoke to Frank McLaughlin, Joe Sinnott, Gray Morrow, Mike Royer (I said hello for you), Steranko, and I said hello to Kirby and Denny O'Neil. It was fun—sorry you couldn't make it.

"P.S. Sorry to read your 'Biro passed away' remark. What's your source? Nobody at the con heard about it. I didn't see 'Way of the Werewolf' yet, but I did have T-Bolt and Blue Beetle penciled in a crowd scene until the last minute, when I decided against using them. I had a reason for erasing them at the time, but can't think of what it was—sorry."

**ONE ART STUDIO** Pete had with other artists didn't work out too well. A young assistant took home with him every night a few comics to read and then threw them away. These were early issues of *Action, Captain America,* etc. These were never replaced and forever missed by Pete.

"I tore all of the Scorchy Smith's out in the old days, and foolishly threw the books away. (There were no fan clubs, or trading posts then; I thought I was the only comic book nut around.) Ooooh, the stuff I threw away."

**CHARLTON NEVER SEEMED** to go out of its way for its artists. Only once was Pete given any original art back. They gave him a T-bolt story, but one page was missing. He never got a single page of original art back of any of the western stories he did. A few years ago, I sent him a Kid Montana original page. If you think about this, it's a heck of a turnaround—fan sends pro a page of his original art.

"Gentile didn't send me any fan mail. Dick must have forwarded three letters while he was boss. I did go up to the Charlton office once—and Dick showed me the incoming mail—seven out of ten were for me (or T-bolt)—but Dick wouldn't forward them to me (I asked)—no reason given.

"Re: the King Features titles—for a while I honestly thought about quitting Charlton, and going over to DC or Marvel—but the idea of 'being late with Giordano deadlines' changed my mind. I can't do that to him again. As for Marvel . . . I'm just not in the mood to clash with Stan again. So, I'll swallow my pride and vanity, and stay where I am."

Pete was very proud of the origin of T-bolt and how well received T-bolt was by fandom in general.

"I know I received some recognition with T-bolt, but I'm not really interested in fame. (If it comes, fine, but I'm not going to worry about it.) All I want to do is 'contribute' to whatever I'm working on. I do have a soft spot for costumed heroes, though, but not enough time to do the kind of job I want to."

We corresponded regularly when T-bolt was originally being published, and he politely turned down every single idea I suggested. One particularly good suggestion, I thought, was to have T-bolt raised and educated by the same monks that had raised the Flame. Since both were the product of a monastery in Tibet, I thought there could be an association, but Pete didn't like the idea.

Here are a few of Pete's random comments about T-bolt:

"I've always felt that T-bolt could be one of the BIG names in comics, and that with proper colors, printing, and distribution, it could make it. That's why I want to own it—for the future! Maybe Marvel or DC would be interested in putting it out—but Charlton wheels said, 'No,' not the comic book rights, so that's it. If I do it again, it'll be for Charlton.

"Nope, I got nothing extra for creating T-bolt—just the right to do the book—and the self satisfaction of knowing that I can affect people with words and pictures—which is a great thrill, when it involves a sincere effort.

"Yep, if T-bolt (that's a big if) comes back—I want to do it—story and art. Frankly, even with the headaches involved—I miss my creation—Tabu, the Hooded One, and all!

"I called the Charlton bosses and tried to 'buy' all rights to my old T-bolt baby—but they said 'no'—they want to hold on to it—just in case!

They've still got a Blue Beetle in stock that they plan to put out in six or seven months—and if that clicks—maybe they'll try T-bolt again!"

Pete drew a story where characters were dressed in costumes for Mardi Gras. [**Ed. note:** *See Pete's con report above and the illustration on page 24.*] Two characters were to be dressed as T-bolt and the Blue Beetle. When Pete inked the story he decided to change T-bolt and Blue Beetle to something different. When I wrote and asked why, this was his answer: "I remember now why I erased T-bolt and Blue Beetle from that 'Werewolf' story. Due to the fact that I'd still like to get all the rights to T-bolt someday—I thought that his lack of appearance in any Charlton mag over a period of years would indicate a sort of abandonment of character on Charlton's part. It was just a thought, maybe not relevant to the issue, but enough to make me erase T-bolt . . . just in case."

**SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH,** Pete told me that he had always intended to reveal that Tabu was the son of the Hooded One. He didn't want this small bit of information leaked because he had always hoped to script and draw this story. As much as I've always felt that Pete was a gifted artist I felt that he was a better writer and hoped that he would write additional Thunderbolt scripts.

The Hooded One, one of the most diabolically evil humans the world has known, has never received the credit he deserves nor has Pete Morisi received the credit for his creation. Perhaps only Dr. Doom is more evil, but then the Hooded One was only depicted in half a dozen issues of *Thunderbolt,* and a times only a few pages per issue. To turn a full-grown dino-

Pete's original script for "Encore: The Hooded One" in **Thunderbolt** #58, July 1957, his last full T-bolt feature for Charlton. From the carbon-copy original that Pete sent to Glen, and courtesy of Glen. © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi.

saur loose on the modern world, you needed to be smart as well as evil. As Kirby & Lee were able to do with Dr. Doom, Pete laid the groundwork for the villainous Hooded One. You hated his evil but felt for the pain he suffered.

Pete and Alex Toth had been art students together in the early and mid-1940s. Throughout my forty-year correspondence with Pete, he praised Alex Toth's art. He felt that Alex could do it all, and that Alex did it better than most. I wish now I had had Pete pencil a T-bolt original and have Alex ink it. The following letter is from 1972, when Pete was unsure of his future:

"Yeah, I enjoyed my visit with Alex at the con—he's a tough cookie and a nice guy, all at the same time. He's outspoken, and will get on an editor's back for any reason at all—and yet he's insecure, and doesn't realize how much talent he's got, and how much he's contributed to this field. Quite a complex guy with very definite ideas.

"Alex told me he's been in touch with Pat Boyette (or rather, Pat called him) and Pat said he'd rather work for Charlton over DC anytime. No pressure, corrections, changes, editors with one-way ideas, etc. etc. I told Alex that all of that was true, except that the 'per page' money wasn't there. He's somewhat interested in doing comic art for Charlton—but lack of money per page may keep him with DC.

"The way I left things with Sol Harrison was that 'I'd call him.' I still don't know what to do. If I continue the way I have been with Charlton, there's the possibility of an editorship in the future, and I'd be foolish to give that up after all these years. Yet, the temptation to jump into a bigger pond, to expand, to get into the big time is gnawing away at me. One thing is certain—I can't have both. If I take up with DC, and they like my stuff, it's bye-bye Charlton and a possible future editorship. I can't work both sides of the fence like—say—Steve Ditko—because I'm only a part time artist. Decisions, Decisions, Decisions.

"Steranko mentioned that he's been doing advertising work, but that he'll be doing comics again soon. I asked him why he dropped out of comics all of a sudden and he said that he had a difference of opinion with Stan Lee over the continued use of his 'special effects' type of work. Stan wanted him to ease off, but Steranko wanted to continue in further effects.

"Re: Capt. Marvel—I told Sol Harrison that Geo. Tuska (who did issue #2 of the old Capt. Marvel) would be a good choice for Capt. Marvel art—if they couldn't get Beck. Actually, now that I think about it, a simplified Toth style, could really do the job.

"I could have spent a fortune at the con on originals, posters, books, etc., and probably would have, if my meeting with Toth had lasted one or two hours as I expected . . . but it didn't . . . so I bought nothing . . . except a round of drinks."

**PETE WAS REALLY UPSET** when Charlton licensed the King Features characters and he was not going to be able to draw the Phantom:

"Here's some fast info that makes me want to scream!

"Just spoke to Sal re: originals, and he says that he has orders not to give anything back, but to destroy the art after a certain time period. So, all of my stuff eventually winds up in a 'shredding' machine.

"That's not my main reason for my writing 'out of sequence'—Here's the screaming news—Charlton will put out the King Features titles in the future. Flash Gordon, the Phantom, Jungle Jim, and Beetle Bailey. Great, huh? Except that 'due to the value of my work in westerns, and deadline considerations' I'm out of the King Features titles, that'll feature original art for: *Flash Gordon*—Boyette; *Jungle Jim*—Boyette; *The Phantom*—Aparo; *Beetle Bailey*—who cares. I screamed, yelled, pleaded and asked, and screamed again—but no deal. 'We need you to keep doing what you're doing.' GRRRRROOWWRRR!"

Oh, what might have been! Pete's rendition of the Phantom, from **Charlton Bullseye** #5, July-Sept. 1976. Courtesy of Bob Layton & CPL/Gang. Phantom TM & © 2005 King Features Syndicate.

OH,OH . . .HE KNOWS I'M LOOKING AT HIM! GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!
IF HE COMES ANY CLOSER, I'LL SCREAM!
EEEEEEIIIIIIIII!
THE SCREAM OF SHEER TERROR ALERTS THE CROWD TO MELANIE ADAMS AND HER HIDEOUS ASSAILANT!
ROWRRRR! HA! HA!
NICE SCREAM, BABY...SURE FOOLED ME! NEXT TIME LET ME KNOW, AND I'LL GIVE YOU A HAND!
2

Page from "The Way of the Werewolf," from **Ghost Manor** #7, Oct. 1972. This is the story Pete alludes to on pages 21 and 22 of this article. © Charlton Comics Group.

**IN A LETTER DATED** June 27, 1973, Pete decided about changing his art style back and away from the use of photos:

"I remember that Kid Montana 'Joe Butone' story slightly—fairly good art—nice lettering by my kid brother Don, who has a natural flair for it (that I still can't match—my lettering is pretty bad). How did you get the page? There's a Charlton leak someplace.

"Yes, I got my Two-Gun Kid filler—bad print job due to the faded ben-day—but so close to Tuska's stuff that it scared me. I never realized I was that exact. Speaking of that stuff, I'm getting pretty fed up with my current art, and am seriously thinking of changing again. I don't enjoy this Prentice-Williamson attempt any longer—the novelty has worn off. Toth is right—the style owns me (with its use of photos)—I don't own the style. I long for the freedom of drawing what I want to draw—instead of drawing what a photo dictates. Al's stuff is great—he's mastered the photo-look, and can live with it—but he'll never recapture the charm of the careless-looseness he had when he hacked out some jobs for Charlton many, many years ago. His stuff is too painfully controlled now, like mine is getting to be.

"I've only done 6 or 7 stories for Charlton in 1973. Now that I've got a little time to turn the stuff out—Charlton has closed its doors for the next few (?) months, due to a paper strike. Out of desperation, I called J. Orlando and John Romita for work, but they both said they'd be glad to give me work AFTER the paper strike is over. Right now, they're just about able to keep their steady artists busy—which is only fair.

"I wrote Wildman twice—about bringing T-bolt and Blue Beetle back—in one book, but so far—no answer. In a follow up letter—no plans for a T-bolt and/or Blue Beetle book in the near future. Wildman's position is that, 'Blue Beetle failed every time we tried to revive it. I can't justify (to the Board of Directors) the idea of trying again. As for T-bolt, we might try it as a back-up feature to E-Man, in the future.' Ye Gods, how the mighty have fallen! He's probably right, but I'd bet a bundle on a B.B. and T-bolt combo."

It's a shame we never got to see if Pete was right about the Blue Beetle and T-bolt as a team. It would have been interesting to see the results and how the two clicked with Pete's writing style.

**IN 1972, PETE'S SON STEVEN** began writing scripts for some of Pete's Charlton mystery stories. [**Ed. note:** *See our interview with Steve beginning on page 28!*]

"Steve's writing is coming along but we've run into snags— #1. He's trying to imitate my style of writing, which isn't his style and that's bad. I want him to develop his own way of doing things—regardless of his old man's influence. #2. He hasn't picked up speed because I've slowed down to a crawl. My 'art-style confusion' has caused me to throw out every piece of art I've done for the past two weeks. (I'll send you a 'rundown' of what I've done in my next letter.) #3. He got an interview with DC, but they loaded him down with so many irritating do's and don'ts (sound familiar?) that he's not going to bother doing anything for them, minor things like always end a caption with dot, dot, dot . . . and never write a panel with more or less than 30–35 words. These (and a million others) are rules that they break every day—and yet they insist that YOU follow them. Sense, it doesn't make.

"Am still trying to get the $1.00 issue of Captain Marvel—with no luck—everybody's sold out. I knew that title was a gold mine when I tried to buy it from Fawcett years ago. If you've got any spare issues I'll buy one from you."

**IN MAY 1974,** Pete and I discussed the similarity between T-bolt and Iron Fist.

Pete said, "Yep, I noticed the T-bolt/Iron Fist lookalike. At first I was kind of annoyed (especially with Dick Giordano involved. I thought he'd be the first one to say, 'Hold on guys . . .') but then as I kept reading the thing, and saw the care that went into it, I was sort of pleased . . . or maybe flattered, is a better word. After all, it took three top men—Thomas, Kane, Giordano—to do what I did—alone. Of course, they did it better—but I'll still take the T-bolt character over Iron Fist. Finally, when they paid tribute to Bill Everett at the end of the story, I wasn't mad at anybody."

**THE FOLLOWING LETTER,** dated July 1, 1974, dealt with Pete wanting to change his style of art back again.

"Am finding it difficult . . . almost impossible to switch style again. Can't seem to please myself, no matter what I do . . . so . . . don't expect a total change on one job. It's a tough nut, blending a photo-straight drawing style into something that looks good. I did it once, so I guess I can do it again, but however it turns out, that's it. No more changes after this. I'll sink or swim with the results.

"I've decided to let T-bolt simmer a while. I don't want to push the strip on anyone who doesn't believe in it 100%. I probably could talk Wildman into a one shot thing in E-Man, but that's not my way of doing things. (Besides, just because I have faith in T-bolt, doesn't make it right.)

"Haven't seen the Toth Batman yet, but I'm looking forward to it. *The Shadow* by Robbins looks good—a little sloppy—but good. His story lettering is what Denny O'Neil needs—but then—Robbins can draw anything. The above sentence sounds like I'm knocking O'Neil—it's not meant that way. It's just that Robbins improves anything he touches. Ditto Toth, Adams, Kirby, and a few others.

"The Tuska 'Luke Cage' is beginning to look a little better, but the story line is hard to take. Kirby's stuff with 'Berry' inking doesn't hold up as well as Mike Royer's. None of the Marvel 'Creepy' size mags grab me. The only thing that keeps me interested in the *Menomonee Falls Gazzette* is Al's stuff and the thought of picking up some Pete Scratch strips I missed.

"The 'old style' is tough to get back into . . . a struggle all the way. I don't usually look at my old stuff, but I did, a few days ago, and surprised myself. Some of it (the Kid Montana stuff) was really damn good. (Sorry if this sounds like boasting—but I can't really 'see' my own stuff until a couple of years have passed.) Had I known it was that good (sorry), I never would have switched styles. As it is, I may have wasted a few good years trying to be another Prentice/Williamson type artist—a style I was never really comfortable with.

"Gray Morrow sent me a letter and said, 'Been trying to contact you, but can't find your phone # or address. I've always liked your work and want you to do some stuff for me on a steady basis. Call me.'

"I called and told him steady work is out of the question—but a 'one shot' now and then sounds okay to me. He said, 'Great—I'll take you any way I can get you. Call me when you're ready.' So, maybe toward the end of July, after I do my next Charlton assignment, I may give him a buzz and see what's what."

Unfortunately, Pete and Gray Morrow never got together on anything. It would have been nice if they had.

Pete's themed illustration that served as the frontispiece in the short-lived **Superior Stories** series from Nesbit Publishers in 1955. See Ron Frantz's article, beginning on page 39, for more about this obscure Morisi work. © Nesbit Publishers, Inc.

**DC WAS VERY UNFAIR** about obtaining the rights to T-bolt. Pete was told that DC was going to use the character and he could go along with the idea or face DC's lawyers in court. He wrote, "When I was squeezed into selling T-bolt to DC, it was with the verbal understanding that I would have an input (story, art, or advisory role) in all T-bolt projects. That was a mistake. Verbal don't count. If it ain't written down, it doesn't exist. I know my ideas and DC's ideas for T-bolt don't match—so maybe they just don't want me around . . . making waves. Still, I put in a lot of time, love, and thought in the creation of T-bolt—and I hate to see it turned into 'just another' super hero strip. Sad, sad, sad. My T-bolt will always be a part of me. If I remember right, you suffered through those birth pains, too." Pete was never really happy with the way T-bolt was handled by DC, who never had the sense to pick Pete's brain for ideas. Pete would have done all he could to help DC. Their big mistake was not having Pete as the writer.

Pete said, "I wrote a somewhat nasty letter to Dick Giordano re: the various broken promises that were made to me about T-bolt. I don't imagine I'll be doing any more work for DC.

"It would have been nice to help out with the new T-bolt. I would have pushed hard for a good artist (Toth/Buscema/Dan Barry/Adams) to do the strip. Also, quality writer like Len Wein/Bob Haney and a few others. Of course the story line would be important. If T-bolt is going to be used as just another cops and robbers strip, then it's a dead duck. The strip has to have a touch of 'soul' about it to make it work—it's the only way I can describe it.

"I'm sure there will be lots of changes with T-bolt. I fought against any change, but DC indicated that there would be some (when we talked, years ago). What I was trying to tell them was that the Superman and Batman origin didn't change after all these years. They were added to, yes, but not changed. You don't change a solid concept that works. Oh, well, don't get me started.

"I agree with you (and I'm not trying to pat myself on the back) but my T-bolt origin was tightly written and well thought out. There was no need for DC to pick away at my concept. All they had to do was move the story forward—but leave the original one. Build on the origin, not change it. The new T-bolt has him being born in the Lamasery (which makes him a Tibetan citizen). His mother dies during childbirth, his father dies of the plague. Then as T-bolt grows up, he attends 'T-bolt classes' along with Tabu and the Hooded One. (Everybody is running around in T-bolt suits.) Tabu is no longer a nice, mild-mannered boy. Now, he's got a hooked nose (like the Shadow) and a flat Indian turban, and a 'Singh' last name—which is more Indian than Tibetan.

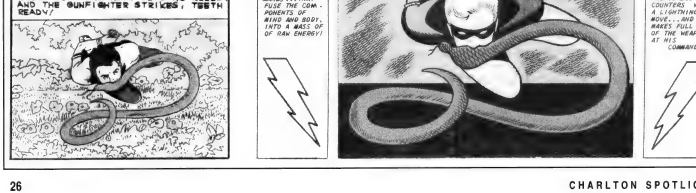
"Yep, I get creator credit on the splash page—part of my contract when I sold T-bolt to DC. I'm glad to see T-bolt's legs covered, but I wanted high boots (like Batman) to complement the design (white boots).

"I was steered into Paul Kupperberg's office. He's the editor on T-bolt. He showed me some 'dummy' copies of T-bolt story and art by Mike Collins. Some of the art was good, some bad. The story seems to follow my ideas, but changes have been made that makes the Hooded One and T-bolt both students at the same time, trying to be chosen to study the ancient scrolls. I had the Hooded One as a young man when Peter Cannon arrived at the Lamasery, as an infant. That age difference was going to allow me a twist, I thought, but fallen by the wayside now, because nobody asked me. I would have chosen a better artist and a better writer—but things are out of my hands. There's no room in T-bolt for me. I wish DC, Dick, and the guys turning out the strip good luck.

"As I mentioned to you before, T-bolt seems to be falling into the DC and Marvel trap, where all costumed characters are interchangeable with each other. The Batman stands alone. Superman stands alone, and I wanted T-bolt to stand alone with a distinct personality—but it ain't happening. My story line would have been different."

**AROUND 1999,** Pete mentioned the high cost of living and how he wished he could do a few stories if there were no deadlines. It was at this time I noticed almost every single retired artist was doing cover recreations. I suggested to Pete

**Above:** Pete sent this very early T-bolt concept drawing to Glen ca. 1965, who says it was unpublished until we ran it in **Charlton Spotlight** #3 last year. But it's just too good not to use again! From a copy of the original art, courtesy of Glen via Ron Frantz. **Below:** Morisi swipes Morisi! On the **left,** Kid Montana takes the initiative in "Jaws of Death," from **Kid Montana** #37, Nov. 1962. **Right,** T-Bolt follows suit in "Beware . . . the Cobra," from **Thunderbolt** #56, Feb. 1967. Says Glen, who brought these panels to our attention, "Pete admitted lifting the idea from a cover of **Amazing Man Comics** [Centaur] by Bill Everett." Thunderbolt TM & © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi; Kid Montana © Charlton Comics Group.


THEN, MONTANA REASONS, THAT THE VENEMOUS CREATURE IS NOT UNLIKE HIMSELF, WITHOUT USE OF ARMS OR LEGS, AND A DESPERATE PLAN IS BORN/ NATURE'S LAW OF SURVIVAL KNOWS NO STANDARDS, SETS NO RULES, AND THE GUNFIGHTER STRIKES, TEETH READY/
THUNDERBOLT STRAINS TO ACHIEVE THE POWER OF WILL . . . THE SERIES OF GIVEN COMMANDS . . . THAT FUSE THE COMPONENTS OF MIND AND BODY, INTO A BASIC OF RAW ENERGY!
THEN, THE KING COBRA STRIKES . . . BUT NO VICTIM OF PREY IS NO LONGER HELPLESS! THUNDERBOLT COUNTERS WITH A LIGHTNING MOVE . . . AND MAKES FULL USE OF THE WEAPONS AT HIS COMMAND!

that he do cover recreations of Johnny Dynamite and Thunderbolt. He was against selling his original art to fans. He wrote, "Besides, I don't believe in selling my art to fans—they deserve something for their interest. Nope, I still disagree, I won't sell art to fans. If I had it to give away, they'd be welcome to it."

I tried to persuade him to sell his cover recreations at a much lower price (around $300) and that I'd act as his agent, but he still insisted he didn't want to sell original art to his fans. His fans would have loved a chance to buy his art, he would have made a few bucks, and he would have kept busy.

On February 23, 2000, Pete wrote the following: "On a personal note, my doctors tell me that in addition to my diabetes, carpal tunnel syndrome, diabetic neuropathy, I now have arthritis . . . which is adding to the pain that I already have—so, as often as I've told you that I hope to draw full stories again . . . it don't look good."

My number-one favorite subject in comics has always been the JSA and second has been Thunderbolt. It always seemed impossible to combine the two until DC obtained the rights to publish T-bolt from Pete in 1992. In the DC version of Thunderbolt, there was a predecessor to Peter Cannon. If there was one predecessor, why couldn't there be a second, an even older one who lived during WWII? And if so, why couldn't he have been a member of the JSA, maybe even retcon him in as Batman's replacement in the group?

I mentioned all this to Pete and he had no problem with it. I was looking for an artist to do a cover recreation, with Thunderbolt replacing Batman. Pete wrote that he'd give it a try free of charge. I sent him a copy of the cover of *All Star Squadron* #1 from *JLA* #193. A few weeks later I received everything back with a letter from Pete saying, "Sorry, Glen . . . but your request for an updated Justice Society didn't work out. Ten costumed characters and a ton of detail, drawn with swollen fingers (and pain) are a bit much. I tried, once again, sorry."

**PETE'S FONDEST WISH** was to write and draw a Batman story. He never had the opportunity, and we can only wonder what his efforts would have been like.

A long, successful DC series was *Sandman Mystery Theater*. Before it began, Pete tried to develop a somewhat similar Sandman story line for DC. He said, "My tentative deal was with Dick Giordano. I wanted to update the old Sandman strip (with gas mask) and develop it like the old TV *Avengers*. You know—far out stories, plots with twist endings. Dick said, 'sounds good,' and we had several meetings about it. I even drew up a sample page for Dick to show his fellow editors, but to no avail. At one point, Dick said, 'In order for DC to sign Roy Thomas to a long-term contract, we had to agree to give Roy first crack at some of our old characters.' Naturally the Sandman was one of them. I was crushed—devastated."

I've stated before that I think Pete was an exceptionally good writer. His approach was different but interesting. He liked to use surprise and shock endings. I know I would have enjoyed his take on Sandman.

One last concept that Pete was working on was Boomerang. Pete described the concept as "an idea in the works that may one day see print." But other than a single full-page drawing, nothing else is known to exist.

*© 2005 Glen Johnson*

Of the above undated concept illustration, Glen says, "Boomerang is a mystery. I don't think he did anything other than this page." From a copy of the original art, courtesy of Glen. © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi.

# Son of PAM

## a talk with PAM's collaborator **Steve Morisi**

### *interview conducted by* **Michael Ambrose**

**[Note:** *Steven Morisi, Pete's number one son, collaborated with his dad in the early '70s on at least nine stories for Charlton, scripting for Pete's art in what must have been a dream come true for both of them. We talked to Steve by e-mail in February and March 2005 about his dad and his own brief career as a writer for PAM and Charlton Comics.*]

**Michael Ambrose:** *Steve, let's start with your vital statistics.*

**Steve Morisi:** DOB April 3, 1950, Brooklyn, New York (aka the fertile crescent!).

**MA:** *Are you the oldest of Pete's sons?*

**Steve:** Yes, I'm the oldest of the three of us. Next oldest is Russ (I'm three years older than Russ and four years older than Val).

**MA:** *I'm guessing that, with a father who drew comics for a living, you must have read a few of them as a kid.*

**Steve:** I grew up reading comics from the "Golden Age" that were in my dad's collection. *Not* a "collector's" collection, but rather a collection of books he loved. They were not sealed in plastic for protection but showed their age. The purpose was to enjoy and refer to them. This, I guess, helped to put me in the same sort of "mind set" as to what a comic should be. I read everything from Plastic Man and Steel Sterling to Batman and (one of my favorites) the Spirit.

**MA:** *What were some of your favorites among Pete's own work?*

**Steve:** He ran through the Kid Montana stories with me when he was writing them. This was my favorite of the westerns. I liked when he developed the "Gunfighters Three." I remember him basing an episode of Gunfighters Three on the RKO movie *Gunga Din* (although, in his version, no one found it necessary to sacrifice themselves in the end). *Gunga Din* was one of his all-time favorite movies. I also found Gunmaster interesting. I was always in awe that he could ink his mask (covered his head like a second scalp) without making a mistake. He really was good with a brush. I think a lot of influence from Sy Barry was there. He did try out inking with a pen for a while but it wasn't the same. But I digress!

Johnny Dynamite was great, a labor of love, using the John Garfield likeness and all. Mike Hammer was all the rage and this was his take on it. Obviously not suited for kiddies.

**MA:** *How did you get started working with Pete on the Charlton stories?*

**Steve:** I always acted as a sounding board while my dad was writing or coming up with ideas, and one day he suggested I come up with complete story plots on my own. When I did, he sent about a half dozen of them to [Charlton editor] George Wildman, who thought it was nice to have a father-and-son team working. He gave us the go-ahead on, I think, two or three of the stories. I remember the first one was with a character called "Strangler Sam." [**Ed. note:** *See this issue's* Charlton Classic Reprint, *following this interview!*]

**Above:** Pete and the Morisi lads in 1958. Front, left to r Val, Russ, and Steve. Photo courtesy of Val and Russ Morisi and © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi. **Below:** St in a recent photo, courtesy of and © 2005 Steven Moris

**MA:** *Did you write other stories besides the weird stuff?*

**Steve:** All of the stories were of the ironic-ending types, à la *Twilight Zone*. They were all of the ghost/weird genre.

**MA:** *Did you write full scripts, or was it more fluid, as in the "Marvel method?"*

**Steve:** We actually sent in a typed-out script to Wildman with every story. In those days it was a lot because it was before word processors, and I used carbon paper to make a copy for myself.

**MA:** *I well remember the days of typewriters and carbons—still have a couple that I use occasionally. Do you still have your carbons?*

**Steve:** Sorry, no.

**MA:** *Tell me a little about how you approached your scripts.*

**Steve:** I learned a lot from my father about how to block out a story. It was much more than just having it plotted out. You had to figure out how to present it in a way that would engage the reader, not only with the words and idea but the pictures as well. Much different from writing, say, a short story for a magazine. My father was a good craftsman when it came to comic book storytelling. His conversion of the scripts into actual pictures on the page was always exciting. It's fascinating when you write some words and another person interprets them as pictures.

**MA:** *Pete wrote to Glen Johnson in 1973 (see page 24 in this issue) that your early writing was "coming along," but that it was too much like his own style. I'm guessing that was unavoidable, given how closely you two worked together.*

**Steve:** I'd say that's accurate. Funny thing is that I tried imitating

his style because, so often, he would "correct" (aka "change") what I wrote, so I thought I'd shorten the process!

**MA:** *Did you write any stories that you weren't credited for?*

**Steve:** No, I got credit on all of them. Only difference was the last one (based on the invention of the guillotine) where I got credit for story plot (because it was my idea and his writing).

**MA:** *I've identified nine stories that you did with Pete. How many total were there?*

**Steve:** Was it nine?! . . . didn't know we put out that much together. I'm ashamed to say I just have one or two of the books. I never really knew when one was coming out, or what store I'd find it in. Let me see which ones I have and I'd be grateful if you could fill in some gaps. My kids would be interested in seeing them!

**MA:** *Steve, they're on their way! I'm assuming all the scripts you submitted were assigned to Pete?*

**Steve:** Yep, all went to my dad.

**MA:** *What did Charlton pay for scripts in those days?*

**Steve:** Five bucks per page. Just to give you a baseline, DC was paying $12.50 a page at that time.

**MA:** *In Glen's article, Pete describes how you and he attended a New York comics convention in 1972 and met Alex Toth, George Wildman, and others. It sounds as though both of you had a good time.*

**Steve:** The comic con was great. What a rush to get a name tag because I was a writer! I remember being fascinated by Alex Toth. He was an artist who could handle anything. I remember my father saying that, in art school, Toth was not satisfied to draw a face, but he wanted to explore how he could make the face old, or handsome, or ugly and so on. With all of this, Toth was unassuming about his talent . . . a nice guy. I remember sitting down at the table during the luncheon when Toth was up on the dais and when my father introduced himself to Wildman, George said, "Oh, yes . . . you're the cop, right?" Red face on my dad at that point!

**MA:** *I'd like to ask you about Pete's working methods. How did the "sounding board" work? Did Pete show you rough page layouts, discuss how he would break down scripts, and so on?*

**Steve:** He would just throw out the premise of the story he was working on. I'd make a suggestion and that might spark something in his head, or he'd discard my idea and say "Yeah, but how about this . . ." and he'd start to work out something. Writing was very difficult for him. The product was excellent, but the process was usually painful for him. He would not let himself settle for anything he thought was less than good, even if it didn't bother anyone else. He also had what you might call a very "straight line" approach to concocting a tale. He'd start out with a beginning and forge ahead to the ending. Myself, I'd usually think of an ending, then pick a place to start the story, and then fill in the middle.

**MA:** *For a part-time comics artist during most of his career, Pete was actually quite prolific. What was his daily working routine after coming home from pounding the beat? Did he work on comics every day?*

**Steve:** Yes. Every day. His desire to produce quality work ("quality" defined as what *he* thought was up to par) slowed down his per-day output . . . but he made it up in perseverance.

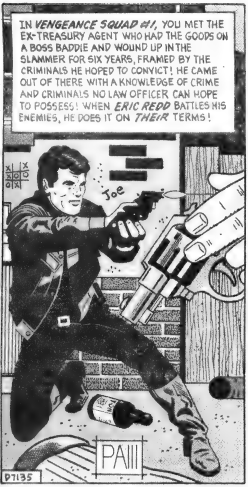
**MA:** *What kind of studio layout did he have?*

**Steve:** When we lived in an apartment in a housing project in Brooklyn, he had what was, literally, a walk-in closet. Shelves on one side to hold comics (stacked at least three feet high), and behind him supplies of paper, glue, ink, pens, and the like. He had the standard adjustable artist's drawing table with the fluorescent light attached to it and a pencil sharpener screwed in to the table. Inking was done with Higgins India ink and a Winsor & Newton brush. I know it was really difficult for him to work in such a confined space, but he accepted it and did the job. He had one of those small projectors for copying swipes, the kind that you lay on top of the picture you want to copy and project it onto the wall. I believe he had a small file cabinet (or was it a box?) to hold comics clipped from newspapers. He had a newspaper delivered to him from out of town just to clip a few strips (I think one was "Johnny Hazard" by Frank Robbins, but I'm not sure). The room smelled of India ink, pencil shavings, and an ashtray full of Chesterfield cigarette butts. This was the setting for, I guess, about the fifteen years we lived there. (My brothers might have a better handle on dates.)

When we moved to Staten Island, he took over a room in the basement where he could actually spread out (a little). This gave him the room to install a large projector to make copies of material. Sorry I can't remember the make or model,

Splash page to "Snowman!" by Pete and Steve, from **Ghostly Haunts** #36, Nov. 1973. © Charlton Comics Group.

HUSH, PLEASE, DEAR READER! WE DON'T WANT TO DISTURB THE MOOD OF THE PRIVATE SCREENING BELOW...OR THE STORY THAT FOLLOWS IT! I'M WINNIE THE WITCH, AND I CALL THIS EXTRA SUPER, COOL LITTLE GHOSTLY HAUNTS PITT...
EDITOR GEORGE WILDMAN
WRITER STEVE MORIEI
SNOWMAN!
PAIII
THERE YOU HAVE IT, GENTLEMEN...THE SCENE OF A DISASTER AREA IN THE HIMALAYAS... POSSIBLY CAUSED BY THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN!
05063


IN VENGEANCE SQUAD #1, YOU MET THE EX-TREASURY AGENT WHO HAD THE GOODS ON A BOSS BADDIE AND WOUND UP IN THE SLAMMER FOR SIX YEARS, FRAMED BY THE CRIMINALS HE HOPED TO CONVICT! HE CAME OUT OF THERE WITH A KNOWLEDGE OF CRIME AND CRIMINALS NO LAW OFFICER CAN HOPE TO POSSESS! WHEN ERIC REDD BATTLES HIS ENEMIES, HE DOES IT ON THEIR TERMS!
Joe
PAIII
D7135

Detail of splash page to **Vengeance Squad** #2. Sept. 1975. Pete told Ron Frantz that in this panel Eric Redd was posed by Steve Morisi. © Charlton Comics Group.

I just know he was introduced to it by Al Williamson, who had used one (very well, I might add) for years. It was a big machine, bolted to the wall with the projector shooting the light downwards. You could adjust the size of the image with a crank that raised or lowered the light housing. I wonder what his output might have been in those earlier years if he didn't have to get down on his knees to make a copy!

I remember him having several hardcover books. In particular there was a *Prince Valiant* book from which I found swipes for book report covers several times!

**MA:** *How did Pete tackle an assigned script? Would he do breakdowns, thumbnails, rough sketches?*

**Steve:** He would sometimes work up character sketches if he needed something special, but usually he just dove right in. Remember though, at the time that I was a teenager he was very experienced and sure of what he could do.

**MA:** *When Pete wrote his own scripts, did he write them first and then break down to pages, or was it a more fluid process, writing and drawing at the same time?*

**Steve:** No drawings until the script was done. He couldn't lay out and draw pages if, in the back of his mind, he was worried about how the story would end.

**MA:** *What were Pete's favorite genres to work in? I'm guessing he really liked westerns.*

**Steve:** You guess right. There was always a special place in his heart for westerns. He really cared for Kid Montana.

**MA:** *Pete drew quite a few romance stories in the early '70s, as the western titles began to lose popularity. This must have been quite a change for him.*

**Steve:** He did not like romance. He never thought he could draw women very well. And anyway, comics were supposed to be what Kirby, Eisner, and Infantino were doing . . . not a Harlequin Romance.

(*Note from* **Val Morisi:** I don't think my father ever wrote a romance story, so I'm guessing his interest was in following in the "Tuska" method, and drawing beautiful women. I know, if asked, my father would always say that he enjoyed the challenge of any story . . . but I think he did have a knack for capturing the moment between two characters (probably his love of film influence), so I think I often see a lot more going on artistically in many of his romance works, than there is in the story line. I get a real kick out of the one-page fillers that have so much style. The women are classy and beautiful, while the "camera" angles and views are cinema style . . . yet clean, neat and understated . . . all while the story goes trite.)

**MA:** *No question that Pete could draw gorgeous women! He had a special fondness for T-bolt, of course. Were there other characters he'd developed that he hoped to produce someday? We know of two that didn't make it, Pete Savage and Boomerang.*

**Steve:** Sorry, I just don't remember any others.

**MA:** *Okay. Did Pete have much of his own art on hand?*

**Steve:** Good question. He was very humble with his own work and did not have it around very often. I remember a time when Lee Ames (a former teacher of his) was over at the house and was looking over the work of Tuska, Toth, and others hanging on the walls. He turned to my dad and said, "Why don't I see any of *your* work hanging up?" Not long after that he drew, inked, and colored a piece to hang up on the wall. Darned if I can remember what it was, though!

(*Note from* **Val Morisi:** As for his collection of his originals, he didn't get much returned from publishers. I have some unpublished pieces, but there's not much of what really went to print. Around his studio and throughout the house were originals by John Prentice, Dan Barry, Frank Robbins, Alfred Andriola, Lee Ames, Lou Fine, Bill Cole, George Tuska, Hal Foster, and Jack Kirby. His walls were decorated with other artists' work while his gems were buried in boxes. It's only now as I go through his collection that I see the volume of art that he painstakingly produced. He was a perfectionist who even had trouble satisfying himself.)

**MA:** *Steve (and Val), thanks very much for sharing your thoughts on your dad and his work with* Charlton Spotlight.

**Steve:** This has been a nice exercise digging into these old memories.

# The Steve Morisi Charlton Checklist

*All stories illustrated by Pete Morisi*

| TITLE | ISSUE | DATE | FEATURE | PAGES | NOTES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ghostly Haunts | 36 | Nov 73 | Snowman | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |
| Ghostly Haunts | 37 | Jan 74 | Surprise | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |
| Ghostly Haunts | 45 | Jul 75 | Executioner | 8 | plot-Steve Morisi |
| Ghostly Tales | 109 | Jan 74 | Hocus Pocus | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |
| Ghost Manor | 14 | Sep 73 | Turnabout | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |
| Haunted | 17 | Jul 74 | Greed | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |
| Haunted | 19 | Dec 74 | The Unholy | 8 | plot-Steve Morisi |
| Haunted | 55 | May 81 | The Unholy | 8 | reps Haunted 19, 12-74 |
| Haunted | 61 | Apr 82 | Greed | 8 | reps Haunted 17, 7-74 |
| Haunted | 67 | Apr 83 | Strangler on the Loose | 8 | reps MGODG 40, 7-73 |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 40 | Jul 73 | Strangler on the Loose | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 46 | Jul 74 | Swamp | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |

AH, THERE YOU ARE, DEAR READER...WELCOME, WELCOME! I'VE BEEN WAITING, WITH A VERY SPECIAL TALE, THAT DELVES INTO THE INNER RECESSES OF THE HUMAN MIND! A TALE I CALL...
DR. GRAVES
STRANGLER ON THE LOOSE
SAM KILL GIRL... SHE DEAD...SAM KILL GIRL!
EDITOR...GEORGE WILDMAN
SCRIPT...STEVE MORISI
PAIII
D3966

## *Charlton Classic Reprint*

Originally published in **The Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves** #40, July 1973. © Charlton Comics Group.

THE INSISTENT RING OF A TELEPHONE RUDELY AWAKENS THE HOUSEHOLD OF DETECTIVE JOSEPH P. SMITH!
HELLO, JOE? CAPTAIN MORGAN HERE! WE'VE GOT A HOMICIDE AT 411 ELM! HOP OVER RIGHT AWAY!
GOT A CASE, ALICE... HAVE TO GO! DON'T KNOW WHEN I'LL BE BACK! HOW ABOUT MAKING SOME COFFEE?
MMMM... COFFEE? IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT? DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH!
ALL RIGHT, LET'S NOT START THAT AGAIN! FORGET I ASKED!
WITH PLEASURE! OF ALL THE MEN I COULD HAVE MARRIED I PICKED THE ONE WHO NEVER GOT OVER PLAYING COPS AND ROBBERS!
YEAH? WELL, I DIDN'T EXACTLY GET THE CREAM OF THE CROP, EITHER! GOOD NIGHT!
FOR DETECTIVE JOSEPH P. SMITH THE NIGHT BEGINS, NOT UNLIKE MANY BEFORE IT! THE NAGGING, AND THE FLARING TEMPERS ARE THE SAME, BUT THIS TIME THERE IS A GNAWING FEELING WITHIN HIM THAT CANNOT BE CONTAINED ... HATE!
THAT CUTS IT! TEN YEARS OF NAGGING IS ALL I CAN TAKE!
SOMETIMES I WISH I WERE ANSWERING A HOMICIDE CALL ON HER!
2

EVEN AS DETECTIVE JOSEPH P. SMITH ARRIVES AT HIS DESTINATION, HE REALIZES THE DIRECTION HIS THOUGHTS HAVE TAKEN!
HEY, I'M THINKING MURDER! THE ODDS OF MY GETTING AWAY WITH ANYTHING LIKE THAT ARE LESS THAN ZERO! BETTER COOL IT!
HI, JOE, YOU MADE GOOD TIME! THE CORONER JUST HAD THE GIRL'S BODY REMOVED! SHE WAS STRANGLED WITH HER OWN STOCKING!
MMM... I CAN GUESS THE REST! THIS SECOND STORY APARTMENT, THE ADJOINING FIRE ESCAPE, AND THAT BROKEN WINDOW ALL FIT A PATTERN! ARE WE THINKING ABOUT THE SAME GUY?
UH-HUH! IT ALL POINTS TO STRANGLER SAM! THE SAME GUY WE PUT AWAY MONTHS AGO! I JUST GOT WORD THAT HE ESCAPED FROM THE PRISON FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE THIS MORNING!
THAT'S BAD NEWS, CAP! WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
I THINK WE'VE GOT HIM BOXED IN, JOE! WE GOT THIS HOMICIDE CALL ONLY MINUTES AFTER IT HAPPENED, AND I STAKED OUT A THREE BLOCK AREA IN NOTHING FLAT!
THAT MEANS A HOUSE TO HOUSE SEARCH!
RIGHT! YOU TAKE SOME MEN AND START ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF ELM STREET WHILE I HIT THE NORTH! SING OUT IF YOU SEE ANYTHING!
3

THE ROUTINE OF THE SEARCH PRESSES UPON THE ALREADY TROUBLED MIND OF DETECTIVE JOSEPH P. SMITH!
YOU GUYS CHECK OUT THE ROOF, I'LL HANDLE THE BACK ALLEY DOWN HERE!
TIME FOR ME TO GRAB A SMOKE! THIS SEARCH IS A WASTE OF TIME! WE'LL NEVER FIND... HEY, WHAT'S THAT?
HOLD IT, SAM... I'VE GOT YOU COVERED! COME OUT NICE AND EASY, OR WE'LL DO THIS THE HARD WAY!
YES... SAM COME OUT... JUST LIKE YOU SAY!
THAT'S FINE, SAM, JUST FINE! WE'LL HAVE YOU BACK IN THE ASYLUM WITH ALL THE NICE DOCTORS AND NURSES IN NO TIME!
ASYLUM? DOCTORS? NO... SAM NO GO! NO, NO... SAM NO GO!
WITH THAT, THE LAST VESTIGE OF SANITY LEAVES STRANGLER SAM, AND SO IT IS AN ANIMAL-LIKE CREATURE THAT SENDS DETECTIVE JOSEPH P. SMITH SPRAWLING IN THE ALLEY-WAY!
NO, SAM NO GO! SAM KILL, KILL, KILL!

UNNN...HE'S TOO STRONG! GOT TO HOLD OUT UNTIL HELP COMES!
THE RAGING FURY OF THE CORNERED BEAST CANNOT BE DENIED, AND IT IS ONLY SECONDS LATER THAT DETECTIVE JOSEPH P. SMITH IS ON THE VERGE OF UNCONCIOUSNESS!
EVERYTHING'S ...GOING BLACK!
HEY, LOOK... IN THAT ALLEY-WAY... IT'S STRANGLER SAM... AND HE'S GOT JOE! GET HIM!
WH-Z SAM RUN! RUN! RUN! SAM RUN!
JOE! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? TALK TO ME JOE!
UNNN...YEAH...YEAH...I'M OKAY! I PUT A DENT IN HIS CHIN...BUT IT WAS LIKE HITTING A MACK TRUCK!
LOOKS LIKE HE GOT AWAY AGAIN, JOE! YOU GO HOME AND TAKE CARE OF THOSE BRUISES...WE'LL FINISH UP HERE! KEEP ALERT THOUGH, STRANGLER SAM MAY TRY TO EVEN THE SCORE WITH YOU!
5

ONCE AGAIN, THE DRIVE BEGINS AND ONCE AGAIN DETECTIVE JOSEPH P. SMITH IS ALONE WITH HIS THOUGHTS!
MMMM, WHAT WAS THAT THE CAPTAIN SAID, ABOUT SAM EVENING THE SCORE? THAT'S INTERESTING... VERY INTERESTING!
SAM ALWAYS WORKS FROM A SIMPLE PATTERN! A FIRE ESCAPE... A SECOND STORY APARTMENT... AND A VICTIM! MY APARTMENT IS THE PERFECT SET-UP!
THIS IS CRAZY... BUT JUST CRAZY ENOUGH TO WORK! EVERYTHING FITS! FOR ONCE THE ODDS ARE ON MY SIDE! SAM IS INSANE, AND CAN'T EVEN TESTIFY IN HIS OWN BEHALF IF HE'S CAPTURED LATER ON!
AS FOR CAPTAIN MORGAN... HE'S MY ACE IN THE HOLE! HE KNOWS THAT SAM IS OUT TO HURT ME SOMEHOW, SO HE'LL RUN TO MY DEFENSE WHEN I TELL HIM THAT SAM KILLED ALICE!
SO, THE LONG YEARS OF CONSTANT NAGGING AND HARRASSMENT TAKE THEIR TOLL, AS SOMETHING SNAPS INSIDE DETECTIVE JOSEPH P. SMITH! HIS DECISION IS MADE! HE HAS BEEN THE JUDGE AND JURY... AND WILL SOON BE THE EXECUTIONER!
ALICE... TONIGHT YOU DIE!
6

MMM...SO FAR, SO GOOD! STREETS WERE EMPTY AND THE NEIGHBORS ARE ASLEEP! GOT TO KEEP THINGS SIMPLE...STRANGLER SAM ISN'T MUCH OF A THINKER!
IT FIGURES... SHE'S ASLEEP ON THE COUCH...WITH THE TV ON ...AS USUAL! ONLY THIS TIME THERE'LL BE NO WAKING UP! THIS IS THE END OF THE LINE!
SO LONG, ALICE!
A HORRIBLE MINUTE PASSES, THEN TWO AND THREE, AND EVEN AS COUNT ALUCARD CLAIMS A CELLULOID VICTIM... ALICE SMITH DIES!
CAN'T PANIC... HAVE TO SEE THIS THROUGH! GOT TO FORCE THE BACK WINDOW FROM THE OUTSIDE ...PUT SCUFF MARKS ON THE FIRE ESCAPE... JUST THE KIND OF TRAIL STRANGLER SAM WOULD LEAVE!
THERE, IT'S DONE! NOW TO CAUSE A LITTLE COMMOTION BEFORE I CALL CAPTAIN MORGAN!
STOP IT, SAM... YOU CAN'T GET AWAY! STOP IT!
7

MINUTES LATER, CAPTAIN MORGAN IS ON THE SCENE!
TAKE IT EASY, JOE...GO OVER IT AGAIN! TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU REMEMBER!
IT...IT'S JUST LIKE I SAID, CAP! SAM WAS STANDING OVER ALICE WHEN I CAME IN THE DOOR! I MADE A GRAB FOR HIM, BUT HE GOT TO THE FIRE ESCAPE FIRST!
JOE, IS THERE ANY DOUBT IN YOUR MIND ABOUT THIS? ARE YOU SURE IT WAS STRANGLER SAM?
SURE, I'M SURE! I EVEN SAW THAT DENT I PUT IN HIS CHIN EARLIER TONIGHT! WHY ALL THESE QUESTIONS?
I'M SORRY, JOE, IT'S NO GOOD! THINGS JUST DON'T ADD UP! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!
UNDER WHA-? HEY, CAP, THIS IS NO TIME FOR GAGS! THIS IS ME, JOE SMITH, YOU'RE TALKING TO!
I KNOW, JOE, I KNOW... AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES THIS EVEN HARDER! YOU SEE, WE GOT A LUCKY BREAK TONIGHT...ONE YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT! WE CAUGHT STRANGLER SAM...AN HOUR BEFORE YOU CALLED!
8
END

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# Ron Frantz
# Charlton Memories
# PETE MORISI
## Before and After Charlton

The books that charmed us in our youth recall the delight ever afterwards.

—A. B. Alcott, *Table Talk, Book I*

**AS A SLIGHTLY MUDDLED** student of history, it has often occurred to me how some situations have a way of repeating themselves. This seems to be particularly true when it comes to the creation of escapist literature, be it a comic book published decades ago by Charlton or the latest Harry Potter novel. With a bare minimum of research, it becomes evident that the origins of most characters, themes, plots, and other literary devices are shrouded in the mists of time. In some literary circles a person can't swing a dead cat without hitting at least one historian, who will be sure to have his own convoluted ideas about any given subject.

From my particular point of view, the dust seems to settle on an obscure 1856 children's book titled *Now or Never; or, The Adventures of Bobby Bright,* written by a Massachusetts school teacher named William T. Adams under the pseudonym "Oliver Optic." The books were popular from the 1850s through the turn of the twentieth century. Adams wrote stories that were slightly ahead of their time, featuring boy heroes who lived pristine lives and performed absolute marvels. *Bobby Bright,* for example, is described as—

> . . . too smart for one of his years. That little gentleman is older than his father, knows more than his mother, can talk politics, smoke cigars and drive a 2:40 horse. He can pronounce the villainous names of sundry French and German wines and liqueurs. One would suppose, to hear him talk, that he had been intimate with Socrates and Solomon, with Napoleon and Noah Webster; in short, whatever he did not know was not worth knowing.

The "boy hero" genre would reverberate through contemporary fiction for decades to come. Although slightly exaggerated, such stories were usually not too far-fetched, enabling young readers to imagine themselves in the role of the hero. The only thing that seemed to be missing in these imaginative tales was the presence of a radioactive spider or an ancient wizard to endow some pure-hearted moppet with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men. The influence of the Optic books on other fiction writers is unmistakable. Following in his footsteps came such literary stalwarts as Horatio Alger, Jr., Victor Appleton (Tom Swift), Roy Rockwood (Bomba the Jungle Boy), Leo Edwards (Jerry Todd), Arthur M. Winfield (the Rover Boys), Edgar Rice Burroughs (Tarzan of the Apes), and scores of other writers who filled endless volumes of boys' books, dime novels, and pulp magazines.

It probably goes without saying that imitation has a tendency to spread like wildfire. By the early 1940s, these same thinly disguised influences could be readily detected in hundreds of comic book stories. This should come as no great surprise, considering they were created by writers and artists who had drawn ideas and inspiration from the same well. Like an endless wave of perpetual motion, this grand tradition of one literary generation influencing the next continues unabated to the present.

As it was with the books of Oliver Optic, the majority of comic books published from 1935 to 1970 were carefully designed to entertain children. This might explain why the comic books that hold the greatest sentiment for me now are the same issues that I read as a youngster. This includes many of the titles published by Charlton. Now, all these decades later, as if I were seeking the proverbial fountain of youth, they still hold a warm spot in my heart.

I suppose I have been more fortunate than most fans in that I've had the pleasure of knowing—and later working with—many of the artists and writers who made the Charlton comics of the 1960s so special to me. For example, I once spent a pleasant afternoon visiting with Steve Ditko at his New York studio. On different occasions I had the pleasure of being a guest in the homes of Frank McLaughlin, Dick Giordano, and Pete Morisi. Last, but certainly not least, I met writer Joe Gill at his Charlton office and spent hours socializing with Pat Boyette at a Dallas convention. Looking back, I feel as if I have walked in the footsteps of giants.

This pleasant chain of events began with a decade of correspondence (1978–1987) with Pete Morisi. If you read my commentary in the previous issue, you already know some of the story. [**Ed. note:** *See Ron's* "Charlton Memories" *article in* Charlton Spotlight *#3 for the first half of this account—and if you missed that issue, see the inside back cover of this one for ordering details!*] At this point, I'll do my best to pick up the loose threads from where I left off there.

**ABOUT TWENTY YEARS** ago, artist Alex Toth told me a curious story while we were chatting in a hotel bar: During a

New York convention in the early 1970s, some nebulous fan asked Toth if he knew the identity of the mysterious artist at Charlton who signed his work "P.A.M." With a twinkle in his eye, Toth remarked: "Sure I do. That's *Pete the Cop!*" Of course, that fan had no idea who Toth was talking about. At the time only a few friends and colleagues knew that "P.A.M." was a pseudonym for Peter Anthony Morisi, a New York police officer who supplemented a modest income by illustrating comic book stories in his spare time.

So why, you might ask, did a talented comic book artist turn to a career in law enforcement? Simply, eating three square meals a day is a hard habit to break. When the comic book industry nearly collapsed in the mid-1950s due to the bureaucratic entanglements leading to the formation of the Comics Code Authority, many top-notch artists and writers found themselves out of work. To say that times were tough would be putting it mildly. As fate would have it, the city of New York needed police officers, so Morisi became a man in blue. It was probably the best career decision he could have made.

Lash LaRue, a character Pete was closely associated with during his early Charlton career. From the splash to "Shadow of the Gunman," **Lash LaRue Western** #77, Mar. 1960. © Charlton Comics Group.

As I've tap-danced my way along the path of life (more like Fred Flintstone than Fred Astaire), I've had the pleasure of knowing several police officers reasonably well. With the possible exception of a few bookies, bartenders, and professional wrestlers, it has been my experience that cops rate among the best storytellers. They can spin a yarn with the best of them and Pete Morisi was certainly no exception. During my second visit to his Staten Island home in the summer of 1979, he entertained me with this anecdote:

It begins with Morisi having been a policeman for only a very short time. One fine evening while patrolling a rough part of the city, he encountered a rather large, pugnacious man who, in a fit of rage, had wounded several people with a butcher knife. It seems the altercation began in a nearby saloon and then spilled out onto the street. It is probably safe to surmise that the troublemaker had been drinking something stronger than milk. Morisi, who was green as grass, jumped out of the squad car and instantly pulled his revolver. His partner, an older and more experienced officer, shook his head and then admonished Morisi by saying: "Put that damn gun away before you hurt someone."

Morisi described his partner as a fat, sloppy-looking fellow who looked about as ferocious as a rabbit. Hoping that his partner knew what he was doing, Morisi put his gun back in the holster and then stepped back to watch the drama unfold. In a nonchalant manner, his partner casually strolled into harm's way, twirling his billy club like an old-fashioned gumshoe pounding a beat. As he drew close, the hooligan made menacing gestures, shouting obscenities at the top of his lungs. Undaunted, Morisi's partner spoke softly: "Easy, now. Put that knife down and we'll talk things over. You really don't want to hurt anyone, do you?" Like hell, he didn't! The hooligan clearly had mayhem on his mind. Finally, his partner moved close enough to act. Then, quicker than the eye could follow, he twirled his billy club around and smacked the fellow on top of the wrist, forcing him to drop the weapon. Morisi said you could hear the bone crack from the impact.

Now in a firm position of authority, his partner said, "Listen here: I don't want any more trouble out of you! Are you coming along quietly or do I have to get tough?" A moment later, with a minor assist from Morisi, he had the hooligan handcuffed and ready for transport to the local hoosegow. For Morisi, the incident provided a much-needed lesson in the art of law enforcement. He discovered, much to his satisfaction, that gunslinger-type bravado is more appropriate for a TV western than the streets of a metropolitan city.

**JUST BEFORE HE BECAME** a policeman, Morisi had worked for a now obscure publishing house known as Comic Media, owned by a fellow named Allen Hardy. Among other things, Morisi illustrated a strip called "Johnny Dynamite." Another major talent in the Comic Media stable was artist Don Heck. It seemed only natural that Heck and Morisi would become friends and share an occasional assignment when sudden deadlines loomed overhead like the sword of Damocles. Among other things, they worked together on *Captain Gallant* #1, a promotional comic book based on the 1950s TV series starring Buster Crabbe. Most of the issue was illustrated by Heck, but I couldn't help noticing that the first story had been penciled by Morisi. Being naturally curious about such things, I asked for details:

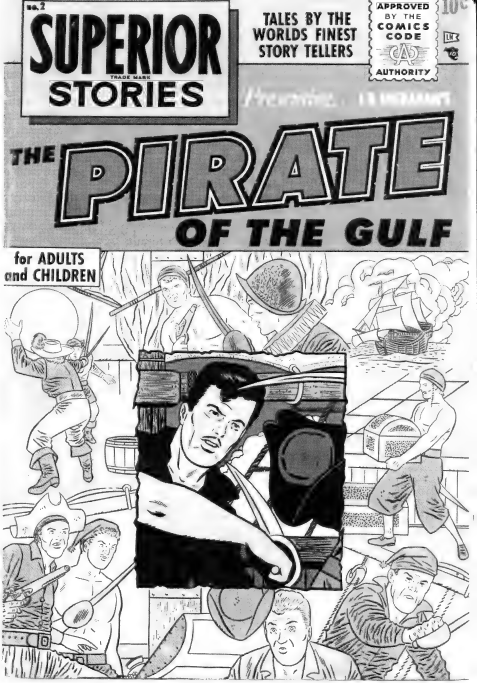
> Captain Gallant—sonofagun—forgot all about that one because I never saw (and don't have) a copy of the finished product. Please send same, if possible, and I'll return it to you. Don Heck and I were work buddies in those Allen Hardy days. My major strip was "Johnny Dynamite," while his was a spy-type strip called "Duke Douglas." Every now and then he'd fall behind and yell for help. I'm not any faster than he is, it just worked out that way. So, I pitched in and did the pencils for a Duke Douglas story he inked, and later on, a Captain Gallant story. I don't know who it was done for, your "Heinz Food Company" is news to me. Don promised me a copy of the book, but never came through. You've got a sharp eye to be able to pick out my stuff under his strong inks. Don Heck always had a knack for turning my stuff into his style.
>
> I wonder what the result would be if I inked his pencils?

Not long ago, while reading the Marvel Comics edition of *The Essential Iron Man*, I noticed one story illustrated by Heck from *Tales of Suspense* #45, titled "The Icy Fingers of Jack Frost." It introduced secondary characters Pepper Potts and Happy Hogan. It surprised me to see that Heck's version of "Happy Hogan" looked a lot like the way I remember Pete Morisi. Although they are not always prone to admit such things, it is not unusual for comic book artists to design fictional characters on people they know. Since both Heck and Morisi are gone now, we will probably never know for sure. In any event, I can't help but wonder if Morisi saw the story. If so, it might explain why some of the gangster-type characters that Morisi drew in *Thunderbolt* bore at least a casual resemblance to Don Heck. Turnabout is fair play, so never let it be said that cartoonists don't have a sense of humor.

**WHILE READING ONE** of Morisi's early Johnny Dynamite stories, one clever bit of dialogue refers to the character lighting up a "Chestie" while smoking a cigarette. Having never heard the expression, I called upon Morisi to elaborate:

> When I started smoking cigarettes, my brand was Chesterfield. When I was drawing "Dynamite" the Big 3 cigarette companies were Camel/Chesterfield/Lucky Strike. The advertising slogan for my brand was "Light up a Chestie." In order to make the Dynamite strip a bit more real, I incorporated the Chestie bit in my writing. Actually, I was hoping the Chesterfield company would see it and think along the lines of a comic strip for advertising their product. A few years later the Philip Morris Cigarette company produced a Sunday strip called "Duke Handy" drawn by Alex Kotsky (of *Apt. 3-G* fame) and did just that. After a fight scene in the strip, Duke would say "Whew, that was a rough one . . . time to relax with a Philip Morris." I don't know if my strip had anything to do with Duke Handy, but the idea was the same.
>
> As I may have mentioned before, the Dynamite strip was a take-off on Mike Hammer, the Mickey Spillane private-eye. That was the rage during those long ago years. Spillane wrote about "bones being splintered" and "teeth cracking in his skull." And so did I. I must admit that every now and then when I look at the Dynamite stuff I cringe a little. The writing was too rough for comics. Yet, at a couple of the N.Y. conventions that I attended, there was always an old time collector who said, "You're the guy who did Johnny Dynamite. Man, that was some strip!"
>
> All of the Spillane "Mike Hammer" books run about the same way. His first one, *I The Jury*, set the standard for the others that followed. The sameness of the books probably called a halt to the series. Spillane once issued a statement saying that he "got religion" and "wouldn't write any more Hammer stories." But I never believed that. He started a new trend that made Sam Spade look like a Sunday school teacher. He cashed in on it with a TV show, several movies, a syndicated comic strip, etc.

It turns out that Mickey Spillane, who influenced Morisi's work on Johnny Dynamite, was an old friend and colleague of Joe Gill, who as no small matter of coincidence wrote dozens of the stories Morisi illustrated at Charlton. Early in his career, Spillane worked as a staff writer at Timely (later Marvel) Comics, sharing an office with Gill. Suffice to say, both men went on to bigger and better things. On the general topic of scriptwriting, Morisi commented in one letter:




Pete's cover to the short-lived **Superior Stories** #2, July-Aug. 1955. © Nesbit Publishers, Inc. Courtesy of Ron Frantz.

Ron says of the two pages of "Buster Crabbe's Western Lore" reproduced on this and the facing page: "To the best of my knowledge, this wonderful two-page western story by Morisi is published here for the first time. It might be considered a lost work of art. The story would have appeared in the fifth issue of Lev Gleason's **Buster Crabbe**, Aug. 1954, and survives on microfilm. Considering that Gleason went to considerable time and expense to produce the issue, which included stories by George Tuska, Doug Wildey, and veteran Charlton comics artist Rocke Mastroserio, one can't help but wonder why it never came out." © Lev Gleason Ent. Corp.

Writing is a tough nut to crack, and writers who can turn out one good script after another amaze me. I can only write on a limited basis because ideas come slowly to me and have to ferment in my mind for weeks at a time. I'd hate to have to do that for a living.

It might be said that the Johnny Dynamite stories published by Comic Media were responsible for Morisi becoming an artist at Charlton. In 1956, Morisi had been a police officer about six months when he received a phone call from Charlton, who had procured the rights to half a dozen of the defunct Comic Media titles. They had plans to continue the *Dynamite* series with new art by Morisi. His initial reaction to the offer was "no." Morisi told the editor at Charlton, Pat Masulli, that he had retired from comics and was involved in a new line of work. If nothing else Charlton was persistent. They continued to call, almost begging Morisi to do some work. Finally Morisi acquiesced, with the understanding that he could only work part-time and that he be given as much slack as possible with deadlines. It proved to be a satisfactory working arrangement. Morisi produced art for Charlton for the next twenty years.

**EARLY IN OUR** correspondence, I had been on the prowl at conventions for old comic books with stories illustrated by Morisi. On occasion I think I confounded him a little by unearthing some obscure story that he had forgotten or wanted to forget. Morisi, bless his heart, was always a good sport about it. Now, a quarter-century later, I can understand how he must have felt. In my own slightly checkered career I must confess to having written a few articles for various fan publications that were so putrid you could smell them a mile downwind on a warm day. The mere thought of some blockhead waving one of them under my nose at this late date is about as pleasant as having an aggregation of ticks colonize my scalp. Feeling a little guilty, I hope my incessant prodding into his early career didn't cause Morisi too much exasperation.

BUSTER CRABBE'S
WESTERN LORE
WESTERN JUSTICE IN THE EARLY DAYS, WAS METED OUT WHEREVER AND WHENEVER IT WAS MOST CONVENIENT. "JUSTICE OF THE PEACE," JAMES BURNETT, TRAVELED THE ARIZONA TERRITORY SETTING UP COURT WHEREVER HIS SERVICES CITIZENS HAPPENED TO BE AND BACKED UP HIS DECISIONS— WITH A SHOTGUN.
I FINE YOU TEN DOLLARS, TOM GIBSON, NOW PAY UP, PRONTO!
BLAME HE NOT FOR 1. WHAT YOU DID 2. WHAT YOU DIDN'T DO 3. BECAUSE HE DON'T LIKE YOU
LET IT BE A LESSON TO YOU!
BLACK BART WAS DUBBED "ROBIN HOOD OF THE WEST" FOR HIS DARING ESCAPADES AGAINST THE WEALTHY WELLS-FARGO STAGECOACH COMPANY. HE WAS LUCKY ENOUGH IN HAVING THE CONTENTS FROM A STAGECOACH, AND LEAVE BEHIND HIM, HIS CALLING CARDS, AS TUESDAY BART WAS EVENTUALLY CAPTURED AND SENT TO PRISON, HIS COLORFUL STORY ADDED MUCH TO THE SAGA OF THE GOLDEN WEST.
FEW OF THE GREAT INDIAN WARRIORS OF THE WEST DISPLAYED THE CUNNING AND DARING OF CHIEF JOSEPH OF THE NEZ PERCE. THOUGH JOSEPH FOUGHT HARD FOR PEACE, THE DISCOVERY OF GOLD AND THE COMING OF THE WHITE MAN, MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO REMAIN FRIENDLY.— COMMANDING HIS WARRIORS, JOSEPH LED THEM INTO BATTLE SUCCESSFULLY, ENGAGED IN ALL, THE AMERICAN MILITARY SENT CAVALRY UNDER GEN. HOWARD TO STOP JOSEPH, BUT WITH NO SUCCESS, THEN IN LATE OCTOBER THE U.S. GOVERNMENT SENT 6 MORE ARMIES, AND FINALLY SUBDUED JOSEPH AND HIS TRIBE THAT TOTALED ONLY 1500 MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN.
IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE COLORADO FRONTIER, WHEN A KILLER WAS CAPTURED, HE WAS TRIED BY MOB, IN TOWNSFOLK, WHERE HIS CRIME WAS COMMITTED, THE TRIAL WAS USUALLY SHORT, AND THE CROWD, ACTING AS A JURY, MADE ITS DECISION BY ACCLAMATION. MAJESTY RULE WON!
GUILTY!
GUILTY!
NOT GUILTY!
BEAUTY SHERIFF LUKE VOLLER! WOLFE EARNED HIS NAME WHEN HE ACCEPTED A CHALLENGE FROM A NOTORIOUS BADMAN. THE RULES WERE THAT A PIT BE DUG IN WHICH BOTH WOLFE AND THE BAD MAN WOULD FACE EACH OTHER IN A BATTLE TO THE DEATH WITH BARE HANDS. THE BATTLE BEGAN AND LASTED FOR SEVERAL HOURS, GRUELING HOURS, BEFORE WOLFE EMERGED THE VICTOR. WHEN ASKED WHAT WAS TO BE DONE WITH THE BADMAN'S BODY, LUKE REPLIED, "NOTHIN'. BURY 'IM WHERE HE LAYS ...IN THE PIT."

While making the rounds of a 1979 Dallas convention, I discovered an issue from one of the Toby crime comics, circa 1952, which featured a story by Morisi entitled "Willie." I've long since parted with the book and am unable to provide specific information. (Sorry about that.) The story was unsigned but looked to me like an early example of Morisi's work. I mailed the comic to him along with a letter of inquiry. With some apparent trepidation, he responded:

You caught me flat-footed with that "Willie" story. I can't deny that its my old stuff but I don't remember ever doing it. Usually I can remember *something* about a job—a page layout, panel, script, or even a good print job—but I've drawn a blank on this one. The pencils must be mine. The inks are mine. And I think even the lousy lettering is mine. The splash figures with their backs turned are Dan Barry swipes. I can't place the job at all, except for a very hazy blur in my mind.

As for my working for Toby Press, it's possible, I guess. In those days there were comic book houses all around the city. It would take a week to make the rounds of all of them: Toby, St. John, Standard, Ace, Fawcett, Avon, Timely, Fox, DC, Crestwood, Dell, Gleason, Harvey, Famous Funnies and a dozen more that have slipped my mind. Fiction House and Harry Chesler are another two. So, it's not unlikely that I would forget a one-shot deal. That's the only explanation I can give you.

No, please don't keep an eye out for another copy of that story of mine. It was so bad that I was tempted to burn your copy, but realized it wasn't my property. I can live without it . . . gladly.

The next vintage Morisi story I unearthed seemed to cause him a little less embarrassment, although he must have wondered where in the world I was digging up these weird old comic books:

*The Invisible Man,* eh? That do bring back some long ago memories. Here's the story on that venture: An artist friend of mine (who wasn't interested in doing comics) had heard that the Dubin Brothers, a printing house located in New Jersey was interested in putting out a line of comic books that would rival the old Classic Comics line. I showed some samples and got the job. The first book was *The Invisible Man.* That was followed by *The Texas Rangers,* a pirate book, and a book about a shipwreck. I don't remember the last two titles. The above sounds like a nice cozy deal, but there were problems.

From the start, there were deadline problems. I was forced to grind out three finished pages per day, something I've never done before, or since. I tried to maintain some sort of quality in the front part of *The Invisible Man,* but had to give that up in order to meet the deadline. In fact, if I remember right, there's a hobo sequence in that book (about five pages) that I didn't pencil. I gave it to another artist (don't remember his name) and I tried to make it look like my stuff when I inked it. I never did that before, either. The books that followed *The Invisible Man* were pure hack—no time for thinking, no time for pretty pictures—just put something in the panel and move on to the next one.

Finally, the deadline problems were under control and I could take my time on the next book, a Jack London story. I was having a ball. Snow scenes, outdoor stuff, adventure—my meat. I had about 1/3 of the book done when the roof fell in. It seems that the Dubin Brothers and their writer had forgotten one little detail when they set up their comics operation. They forgot to get permission from the copyright holders and that put an end to it.

The Jack London story was coming out nice, but after the Dubin Brothers called it a day I couldn't stand having it around—so, out it went.

IN 1879, MEXICAN RUSTLERS RAIDED AND PLUNDERED THE TEXAS RANCHES. DRIVEN BY THIS ACTION, THE TEXAS RANGERS INVADED MEXICO AND DEFEATED BOTH THE RUSTLERS AND THE MEXICAN CAVALRY AS THEY QUICKLY RECLAIMED THEIR STOLEN CATTLE.
IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE FEARLESS RIDERS OF THE PONY EXPRESS, SPEED WAS THE MAIN REQUIREMENT FOR THEIR EXISTENCE. SO, RIVALS WERE THE RULES OF THE 'PONY' THAT THE STATION RIDERS WERE PERMITTED ONLY TWO MINUTES IN WHICH TO TRANSFER THE SADDLE BAGS TO A FRESH HORSE, AND BE OFF AGAIN.
TOM COMSTOCK SEARCHED FOR TEN YEARS, BEFORE HE STRUCK IT RICH. HOWEVER, THE GOLD ON HIS CLAIM WAS NOT WORTH MINING, BECAUSE OF A STRANGE 'BLUE CLAY' THAT HAMPERED REFINING. DISGUSTED, COMSTOCK SOLD HIS CLAIM AND LEFT FOR PARTS UNKNOWN. FATE HAD DEALT HIM A CRUEL BLOW. HOWEVER, FOR THE 'BLUE CLAY' STOOD ON A LEDGE OF SOLID SILVER. THIS WAS CALLED THE COMSTOCK LODE, AND BROUGHT MORE THAN 340 MILLION DOLLARS... TO ITS NEW OWNER!
SILVER CITY, PERHAPS, ONE OF THE WEALTHIEST MINING TOWNS OF THE WEST, ONCE BOASTED A POPULATION OF 5,000 AND A MINERAL OUTPUT OF $40,000,000. HOWEVER, THE MINES WERE WORKED OUT, AND THE BOOM TOWN OF THE WEST TODAY STANDS ALONE AND DESOLATE. SILVER CITY: A GHOST TOWN.

In case you are interested in tracking down these books, you will find them listed in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* as *Superior Stories* #1–4, May–Dec. 1955. The publisher is Nesbit Publishers, Inc., who produced in succession *The Invisible Man,* by H.G. Wells; *The Pirate of the Gulf,* by J.H. Ingrahams; *Wreck of the Grosvenor,* by William Clark Russell; and *The Texas Rangers,* by O. Henry. Presumably the unfinished Jack London story Morisi mentioned would have been an adaptation of *The Call of the Wild.*

**ON A TRIP TO NEW YORK** in December 1978 to visit my in-laws, I managed to sneak away long enough to visit a few artists with whom I had been corresponding, including Morisi, George Evans, and science fiction illustrator Stephen Fabian. I called on Evans at his home a few days after meeting Morisi. Having previously met Evans at a 1976 Oklahoma City convention, it was nice to see him again. While we were shooting the breeze, I casually mentioned Morisi's name and showed Evans a bound volume of *Thunderbolt* stories. I also told him about Morisi's difficulty finding a job illustrating comics after Charlton scaled back their operation a few years earlier.

Evans, who was not familiar with Morisi's work, said, "Hey, this guy is really good. I can't understand why he is having trouble getting work. If I hear of anything I will pass the word along." I gave him Morisi's address and phone number and suggested they get together some time and talk shop. Evans and Morisi never did meet, which I thought was unfortunate. The reasons were fairly obvious. Morisi was too modest to impose and Evans was busy ghosting one of the soap-opera strips for King Features. However, a few months later I received the following note from Morisi:

> I wrote a "thank you" note to George Evans. It seems that he suggested my name to a comics advertising outfit looking for an artist. They called me, looked over my stuff, liked it and then they dropped a bombshell. They wanted 16 pgs. done in two weeks, with the possibility of extensive changes being demanded by the advertiser, as a certainty. I told them "no

can do" and that was the end of it.

The above, of course, doesn't change the fact that George did me a good turn—without ever meeting me. He's quite a guy.

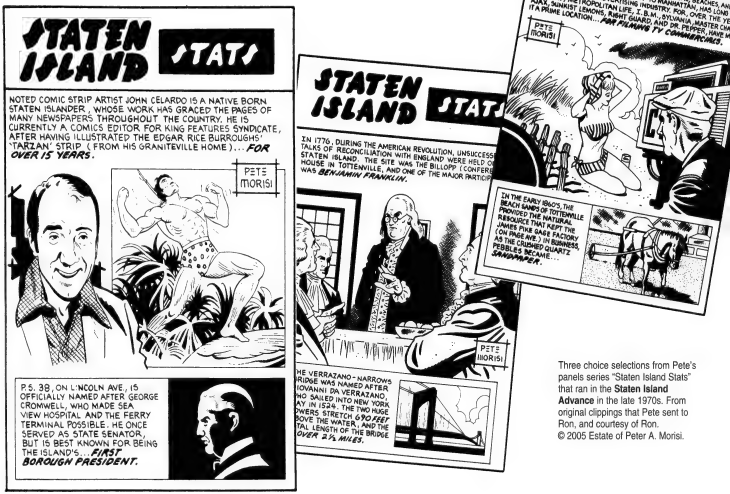
During my visit to Morisi's home I had the pleasure of seeing his remarkable collection of original art. Some of the nicer pages were framed and hanging in his study. Walking into the room, it was almost impossible not to notice the Golden Age Jack Kirby splash page from the *Boy Commandos*. Let me tell you, there are not many of those floating around! Hanging next to it was the most magnificent piece of original comic book art that I have ever seen, a hand-colored Jack Cole page from *Daredevil*. Sparkling like a newly minted dime, the mere sight of the page was enough to take your breath away. There is, of course, an interesting story about how it came into Morisi's possession.

In the early 1940s, Morisi had an after-school delivery job in Manhattan, where most of the comic book companies were located. Hoping to be a comic book artist himself one day, he would visit these publishers at every opportunity. One afternoon he asked someone in Lev Gleason's office if he could have a page of original art. The guy at the front desk said: "Sure, kid. Wait a minute and I'll find something for you." He returned a few minutes later with that beautiful Jack Cole page. He handed it to Morisi as if it were an empty pizza box and said: "There you go, kid. I hope you like it."

Years later, when Morisi had turned professional and was illustrating crime stories for Lev Gleason, he learned from editor Charlie Biro that the color Jack Cole page was supposed to have been the grand prize in a readers' contest sponsored by Gleason. After the page "mysteriously disappeared," they ended up giving the winner something else. Jokingly, I asked Morisi if he had considered giving it back. He looked at me as if I had just insulted his wife, and answered, "Are you kidding?"

Morisi then told me about a visit from another fan a decade earlier who had seen the Cole original. At the time Morisi lived in Brooklyn and was storing the page in the basement, stacked with all the other originals in his collection. Appalled, his guest tersely told him that "anyone who owned that work of art and didn't have it framed and hanging on the wall ought to be horsewhipped." Finding himself in a poor position to argue, Morisi shrugged and promised he would get around to it. He did, a mere seven or eight years later.

Finally, Morisi showed me a big stack of George Tuska originals from *Crime Does Not Pay*. There must have been several dozen of them. It was getting late in the afternoon and I only had a few minutes to glance at them. I very much wish there had been more time. Sadly, it was one of those fleeting moments that would never come again. A few weeks


STATEN ISLAND STATS
NOTED COMIC STRIP ARTIST JOHN CELARDO IS A NATIVE BORN STATEN ISLANDER, WHOSE WORK HAS GRACED THE PAGES OF MANY NEWSPAPERS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. HE IS CURRENTLY A COMICS EDITOR FOR KING FEATURES SYNDICATE, AFTER HAVING ILLUSTRATED THE EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS' "TARZAN" STRIP. (FROM HIS GRANITEVILLE HOME)... FOR OVER 15 YEARS.
PETE MORISI
P.S. 38, ON LINCOLN AVE., IS OFFICIALLY NAMED AFTER GEORGE CROMWELL, WHO MADE SEA VIEW HOSPITAL AND THE FERRY TERMINAL POSSIBLE. HE ONCE SERVED AS STATE SENATOR, BUT IS BEST KNOWN FOR BEING THE ISLAND'S FIRST BOROUGH PRESIDENT.
IN 1776, DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, UNSUCCESSFUL TALKS OF RECONCILIATION WITH ENGLAND WERE HELD ON STATEN ISLAND. THE SITE WAS THE BILLOPP (CONFERENCE) HOUSE IN TOTTENVILLE, AND ONE OF THE MAJOR PARTICIPANTS WAS BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.
PETE MORISI
HE VERRAZANO-NARROWS BRIDGE WAS NAMED AFTER GIOVANNI DA VERRAZANO, WHO SAILED INTO NEW YORK BAY IN 1524. THE TWO HUGE TOWERS STRETCH 690 FEET ABOVE THE WATER, AND THE TOTAL LENGTH OF THE BRIDGE IS OVER 2½ MILES.
STATEN ISLAND STATS
STATEN ISLAND'S SCENIC WEALTH OF WOODED AREAS, BEACHES, AND PARKS, COUPLED WITH ITS CLOSE PROXIMITY TO MANHATTAN, HAS LONG BEEN OF INTEREST TO THE MOVIE INDUSTRY. FOR OVER THE YEARS, POLAROID, DUE TO ADVERTISING INDUSTRY, FOR OVER THE YEARS, AJAX, MANHATTAN, LEMONS, NIGHT GUARD, AND DR. PEPPER HAVE MADE IT A PRIME LOCATION... FOR FILMING TV COMMERCIALS.
PETE MORISI
IN THE EARLY 1960'S, THE BEACH AREA OF TOTTENVILLE BECAME THE NATION'S PRODUCTION CENTER FOR THE JAMES PINE DATE FACTORY. ON SOME AVE. IN BUSINESS, AS THE CRUSHED QUARTZ PEBBLES BECAME... SANDPAPER.

Three choice selections from Pete's panels series "Staten Island Stats" that ran in the **Staten Island Advance** in the late 1970s. From original clippings that Pete sent to Ron, and courtesy of Ron.
© 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi.

later, I asked Morisi if he would consider trading one of those Tuska originals for a nice *Thunder Agents* page. It was no soap.

> Nope, sorry, but I value my Tuska originals. I know that we flipped through them like they were so much junk, but to me they're works of art. I'm constantly amazed how comics fans, and the industry itself, pays so little attention to that very important era of crime comics. It's almost as if it never existed. Yet, it produced Tuska/Barry/Kida/Fuji, to name a few, and elevated the art-level of the entire industry.
>
> Some of those *Crime Does Not Pay* originals by Tuska were given to me by a friend who did lettering for Biro in the old days. He'd take a handful of originals from a three foot high stack in Biro's office every now and then, and take them home with him. This wasn't stealing. They were just there for anybody to take. Anyhow, he'd use the backs of the originals to leave messages for his wife. I have one that says "Pick up the laundry" in bold brush lettering. Amazing, isn't it, how one guy can treat a piece of artwork as garbage, and another as a prized possession?

With all the controversy in recent years regarding the ownership of original comic art, it is difficult to imagine a time when such things had little value. As it is with so many vintage collectibles now commanding exorbitant prices, they are now rare because hardly anyone considered them worth saving. In this instance, the thought of someone using an original page from *Crime Does Not Pay* as a notepad boggles the mind.

> I thought that "Tuska original" story would grab you. I cringed when I found out the facts involved and salvaged as many Tuska and Dan Barry pages that I could from this lettering friend of mine. That kind of story was pretty common—at least in the old days of comics. After an original was used, you'd actually be doing the publisher a favor by taking those unwanted drawings out of his office. Toth once told me a story about how he was making the rounds in the old days, and asked an editor if he could spare any originals. Toth wound up with a full story of Lou Fine's "Black Condor"!! Toth later lost those originals—somehow—doesn't that make you want to cry?

THERE! WHAT DID I TELL YOU? ISN'T THAT A GREAT SIGHT ?
BOOM ROOMS BUGGED!
YES, ERIC, I KNOW! IT'S BEAUTIFUL! TULSA AND I HAVE THE SAME VIEW FROM OUR ROOMS! NOW, WE'D BETTER GET READY FOR DINNER! THERE'LL BE NEARLY FIFTY WEEK-END GUESTS THERE!
THE DINNER WAS LAVISH! CHAMPAGNE, CAVIAR, EVERY DELICACY KNOWN TO MAN WAS SERVED IN THE GREAT DINING ROOM! AFTERWARDS, THE GUESTS MINGLED, AS THE V-SQUAD REMAINED ALERT!
WHEN MME. OTOKOPOULOS HIRED THE VENGEANCE SQUAD TO PROTECT HER GUESTS, SHE SAID WE COULD CHARGE TRIPLE OUR USUAL RATES! NOW I SEE WHY! THERE'S ENOUGH LOOT IN THIS ROOM TO BUY EIGHT COUNTRIES OUTRIGHT!
THAT WAITER IS CARRYING A SMALL GUN! IN FACT, ALL THE SERVANTS ARE ARMED! THE QUESTION IS...ARE WE BEING PROTECTED OR ENDANGERED BY MME. OTOKOPOULOS'S PEOPLE ?

Ron tells a fascinating tale about the image above and on the next page: "In **Charlton Spotlight** #2, I told my story about visiting the Charlton Comics office in the summer of 1987. During the visit I had the pleasure of spending a few hours searching through Charlton's dusty warehouse where they stored black-and-white proofs for thousands of comic book titles they had published, along with what remained of the original art. While picking through several large stacks of art, I stumbled across two unpublished Morisi pages from the final issue of **Vengeance Squad** (#6, May 1976). The pages had been deleted from the issue to make room for a reader survey. Excited by the find, I later showed the pages to Ed Konick, Charlton's general manager. He considered the pages unimportant and offered them to me as a gift, for whatever reason. Of course, I was delighted to accept. It seems fitting that they should finally be included in this special Morisi tribute issue of **Spotlight**." We heartily agree—and here they are! © Charlton Comics Group.

**ABOUT 1980,** Morisi received an invitation to join the prestigious National Cartoonists Society. Personally, I thought it was a good idea as it might have given a boost to his then-flagging career. For example, George Evans once told me how membership in the society helped him land a job with King Features. Morisi for whatever reason was cool to the idea:

> I still haven't made up my mind about joining that Cartoonist Society. Your point about rubbing elbows with other guys in the business is well taken—and might sway me—but I've been a lone wolf all my life and I'm not sure I want to change now.

It would seem that my pleas had fallen on deaf ears. Once Morisi made his mind up about something, not much was likely to change it. You certainly can't fault a man for that. Even if I didn't quite understand his rationale, I found his convictions admirable:

> I decided against the Cartoonist Society thing, for no particular reason other than the ones I mentioned. I don't want to be judged (or accepted) as a person by what I do as an artist. It never fails to happen that way. The hot-shot artist who's got a popular strip running can be rude, a bore, etc., but he gets the respect and attention of his peers and his words become "pearls of wisdom." Nope, it's not my thing. Small, informal "let have lunch" get-togethers with a few guys is my speed. Society, or club-type meetings are out.

About this same time, George Evans recommended Morisi to *National Lampoon* magazine, which needed a comic book artist for a special assignment. I remember Evans telling me that he had become the regular artist on the *Secret Agent Corrigan* newspaper strip and was too bogged down with deadlines to accept the job himself.

> I got a call from the *National Lampoon* magazine people the other day. They wanted me to illustrate a "love story" type script for them—and offered me fantastic money, to boot. I said "yes" and the editor went on to describe the panels in the script to me. Everything was fine until the final panel, which would have required me to draw a girl in a highly suggestive (almost porno) type pose. I still said "yes," then kicked it around in my head for awhile, spoke to my wife about it, and we both agreed: Big money or not, the answer was "no!" I called the *Lampoon* people back and told them it wasn't my kind of thing. Case closed. Bye-bye, big money.

It would seem those *National Lampoon* people were nothing if not persistent. They must have seen something in Morisi's work that they liked, so they tried again:

> *National Lampoon* called me again, and I told them that I don't do porno (for the second time). They assured me they had a clean script for me. I said okay and they sent me the script. It was clean as a whistle, not a porno picture in the script—except that four-letter words flowed like water. So, I returned the script and called it a day.
>
> I wrote Alex Toth and told him about my *National Lampoon* experience. He came across the same situation while doing some work for a Spanish comics outfit. The writers and editors wouldn't clean up their act so Alex stopped doing stuff for them. Toth and I agree—we're no angels and can curse up a storm when we want to—but we don't do it in strips or comics.

**SOMEHOW, WHILE** discussing a wide variety of topics, Morisi and I always seemed to find our way back to Thunderbolt. I guess it was something we both enjoyed talking about. In one of his first letters, Morisi told of a failed effort to regain the rights to his creation:

> After the T-Bolt strip died I tried to buy the complete rights to the thing from Charlton. I planned to sit on it for awhile, develop some good, strong story lines, then try to re-introduce it, either as a daily strip or a comic book for Marvel or DC. But Charlton said, "no." They probably thought I had a buyer waiting to pick it up and wouldn't let me have my own creation back. Some business, huh?
>
> I don't think Charlton will "give" or "sell" anything to me that could possibly be a hit for another outfit—even if they don't have any plans for using the strip in the future. Such is the nature of this business. I create it, they own it, or my idea never gets into print—and to hell with any moral obligations. Now I can feel for Siegel and Shuster, and the hassle they went through with Superman.

Much to his surprise, Charlton returned the Thunderbolt rights to Morisi a few years later. Call it a goodwill gesture, for old times' sake. In light of the stories we've heard about Charlton's ties to organized crime and the like, it is nice to know they were capable of such kindness. This occurred a year or two before DC bought the rights to most of Charlton's action-hero characters, supposedly as a gift for Dick Giordano. Contrary to popular opinion, the sale did not include *Thunderbolt*, although some people at DC seemed to think it did. Needless to say, Morisi was happy as a lark and we began to discuss what he should do with the character. For several months the topic dominated our correspondence. The following are bits and pieces from his letters on the subject:

> I've got some good news and some bad news, regarding my attempt to gain ownership of T-Bolt from Charlton. The good news—Charlton has given me the worldwide rights to Thunderbolt. The bad news—those rights don't include

Second unpublished page from **Vengeance Squad** #6, May 1976. © Charlton Comics Group.

AH, YOU ARE AWAKE NOW, ERIC REDD! YOU ARE MY GREATEST DANGER! THE JET PLANE I SENT OUT TO DESTROY YOU FAILED...
BUT I WILL NOT!
OWWW! YOU'RE HURTING ME!
MISS CANDY ORR IS COMING WITH US, REDD! SHE DIES IF YOU TRY TO PREVENT OUR ESCAPE!
OKAY, NIKLOS, YOU HOLD ALL THE ACES! I DON'T CARE IF YOU STEAL EVERY DIAMOND IN EUROPE...JUST SEE TO IT THAT CANDY ISN'T HARMED!
YOU ARE WISER THAN I BELIEVED, ERIC REDD!
AT ANCHOR IN A SNUG LITTLE HARBOR THE YACHT OF THE DIAMOND QUEEN FLOATED SERENELY!
TAKE THE TREASURE ABOARD THE YACHT! I WILL MAKE SURE WE ARE NOT PURSUED!
A FEW GRENADES WILL DISABLE EVERY FAST VESSEL IN THE HARBOR!

Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Indonesia, and several other countries. What it boils down to is this: If the distributors of Marvel, DC, Pacific, have markets in any of the above mentioned countries, and are denied those markets because of the restriction on T-Bolt—they won't distribute anyplace. So, it follows that if the distributors won't distribute the publishers won't publish. That leaves T-Bolt in a state of semi-limbo.

To say the least, I was thrilled that Charlton gave me back most of my Thunderbolt creation. I'm still in somewhat of a cloud as to what I am going to do with it—now that ownership is a reality. I'm going to have to learn how to draw T-Bolt all over again. The few sketches I've made of him over the years never captured the old look. I'll have to try and go back a bit, if I can.

You're probably right about my not being able to capture the "old" T-Bolt look. My art and ideas have changed. The best I can hope for is to blend the old with the new.

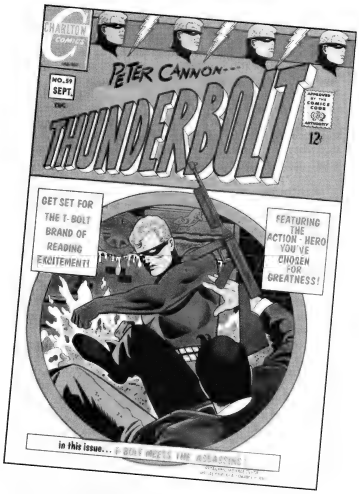
George Tuska was always a favorite of mine, but it wasn't until an editor pointed to some of his work and said, "that's the kind of stuff I want" that I made a decision. I asked George's permission to work in his style and he said "okay." So, for years after that I worked strictly in the Tuska style. Then, I ran into Al Williamson, and he talked me into using photo's with my art. That's where I'm at now, a mixture of Tuska, photo's, and PAM.

Your advice about not trying to imitate my old stuff is well taken, but it presents a problem. Looking back over my stuff I find myself liking the Tuska/Morisi look better than the Williamson-photo/Morisi look. My kids agree with me, as do most of the people I've asked. I'm comfortable with that drawing style, it's coming back slowly. I think I'm going to settle for that . . . at least for now.

I talked to Dick Giordano about publishing T-Bolt. He was interested, but had to talk to DC's lawyers first. They said, "no." My restricted ownership of the title would hamper their overseas sales and put them on a collision course with their overseas' distributor who has a right to make use of all of their books.

It always seemed odd to me how Morisi had not drifted over to DC in the late '60s with editor Dick Giordano, as did several other Charlton artists, including Steve Ditko, Jim Aparo, and Pat Boyette. When I asked Morisi about it, he said it had been discussed, but at the time Giordano didn't have a spot for him. As things worked out, Giordano didn't last long enough as an editor at DC for one to materialize. Then Morisi told the following story:

> DC made a federal case out of an unimportant, minor change that I made in the one (and only) job I did for them, some 6/7 years ago. The scene called for a semi-long shot of a well kept, exclusive home of the rich bad guy in the story. To go along with that thinking, I added a sexy broad sitting by a built-in pool that went with the house. When I mentioned that to the editor, he said, "You did *what*? No, no, no, that's not in the script. Do you relate money with loose women? Is that your thinking? You just can't go adding things like that, etc. etc." To which I said, "Okay, I'll erase the broad."
>
> The editor that gave me static was Joe Orlando. That's probably why I'm not with DC now. The issue was *Dark Mansion* #11, July, 1973. Jerry Bails (or maybe it was someone else?) once wrote me and said that he knew for sure that I had done other work for DC. The above story is the one and only DC job I ever did.
>
> I can't figure Joe Orlando out. He's a tough guy to talk to—sort of protects himself with an outer shell. The few dealings I've had with him always seem to lead to a collision course, so I've stopped trying.




Pete's cover to **Thunderbolt** #59, Sept. 1967. © Charlton Comics Group.

**ABOUT 1982 DICK GIORDANO** returned to DC, becoming a vice-president. He and Morisi had been friends for years. Having worked with Morisi at Charlton, doing so again at DC seemed a likely prospect. Morisi provided some interesting insights on the subject in letters spanning a period of a year or so:

> I read in some fanzine that Dick Giordano is once again an editor at DC. So, after a month or so, I gave him a call. We had lunch a couple of times and talked about the possibility of my doing work for him. The answer is more "yes" than "no" at this stage—but things are complicated at DC because editors no longer make decisions on their own, anymore. Everything has to go before a "Board of Editors" and things like that take time. I'll let you know when I know.
>
> Things are somewhat involved up at DC. Dick keeps insisting that he wants me to do work for him (although I offered to forget about the whole thing, with no hard feelings) but he said "no"—"just give me a little time." I know

for a fact that Dick is busy. He is up to his ears in work, meetings, and trips to various parts of the country, to make advertising deals and promotion things. So, I really can't fault him for not being able to push my employment at DC.

I mentioned to Dick that I want to bring back one of DC's old characters, and that presented him with certain problems that can't be solved overnight. I'm not being cute by not mentioning the character's name—it's just that Dick wants to keep it hush-hush until it becomes a reality.

The Golden Age character Morisi wanted to revive was the Sandman. About this same time, writer Roy Thomas made a much-ballyhooed transition from Marvel Comics to DC. Apparently Thomas wanted to use the character himself in some capacity and was unwilling to allow Morisi a free hand. Dick Giordano found himself caught in the middle of a minor tug-of-war. Under the circumstances, I suggested to Morisi that teaming up with Thomas might be a suitable compromise:

Roy Thomas is an excellent writer, better than I'll ever be, and the thought of a team-up was the first thing in my mind when Giordano mentioned that Thomas was interested in the Sandman. I was a split-second away from telling Dick, "Okay, let Thomas write it and I'll draw it," but the words just wouldn't come out. They stuck in my throat as a million thoughts ran through my head. The writer controls the story, and the speaking personality of the hero involved, along with the basic concept of the character, and the mood of the strip. I just couldn't give away that much control of the strip as long as there's a slight chance that I can do it myself.

Dick has offered me other work while the Sandman thing is worked out—but I'm really not interested in going back to the grind of science fiction and/or mystery stories at this point. I've locked myself into a "all or nothing" situation—and we'll see what happens.

For a number of months the impasse between Morisi, Giordano, and Thomas regarding the Sandman trickled along without resolution. Morisi continued to keep me advised of developments:

My lunch meeting with Dick Giordano a few weeks ago resulted in his saying: "Sorry, Pete. Nothing's changed with the Sandman thing. I can't afford the possibility of causing any friction between Roy Thomas and DC by taking it away from him. He expressed an interest in the strip when he first came to DC, so, until he gives it up, he's got first crack at it. So . . . you can forget about the thing completely, hang on for further developments or create something new for us along the sword and sorcery line."

My dealings with Dick Giordano have hit a brick wall. DC has plans for the Sandman (probably in a team-up) and that wipes out my ideas of using him as a back-up feature for Batman in *Detective Comics*. Dick said, "You better forget it."

At some point in my talks with Dick, he offered me an editorship at DC—based on a final OK by the people above him. Well, the big meeting took place and the name of Marv Wolfman crept into the conversation. He was available, a good writer, and had previous experience as an editor, so he got the job. I guess I can't really blame the DC bosses. Breaking in a new editor takes time, and they've got projects ready to go right now. Still, it would have been interesting to see how things are done behind the scenes.

**SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDST** of all this beehive of activity Morisi hooked up with a local newspaper to produce a weekly comic strip titled *Staten Island Stats*. I may be a little biased but I think Morisi did some of his finest work on the feature, which lasted several years. It began something like this:

I had approached the newspaper editor about 1½ years ago with samples of my work. He said, "Nice stuff, but how can I use it?" I shrugged, he shrugged and we left it with that he would call me if he had any use for my work. Finally, some 7 or 8 months after that, I realized that Staten Island was rich in historical facts and local color, so I made up a few samples. My second trip to the editor was different. He looked at the stuff, nodded his head, and said, "Yes, yes, yes . . . I've got just the spot for this. Friday, once a week, okay?" I agreed, and we had a deal.

I'm enclosing some "Staten Island Stats" as promised. They're nothing fantastic, but I enjoy doing them and hope I can get back some of the drawing skill that seems to have drifted away.

Now that I'm back to drawing pictures again (at least on a small scale) I realize that I've lost a lot during my lay-off. My eyes aren't what they once were and the tiny detail work is a lot harder to do. So, Ronald, if you can avoid it—don't get old.

The *S.I. Stats* thing seems to be going okay. Newspaper readers don't write letters like comic book fans—so I had no way of knowing how it's doing. The editor seems to like the stuff. He says, "Very, nice, thank you . . . see you next month" and that's the end of it. The only problem with *S.I. Stats* is that sooner or later I'm going to run out of facts to write about—and that means finis. Finding information is gettiing tougher all the time. Luckily, I'm a few months ahead and can take a little longer searching for things, but I don't know how much longer I can keep going.

The *Staten Island Stats* info is taken from old books in the library, but that source is running dry—fast. Speaking of the "Stats" thing, someone once mentioned that John Celardo, the old Fiction House and Standard artist lived out here. Celardo did the daily and Sunday *Tarzan* strip for over 15 years. I looked him up and did an article on him. Nice guy, easy to talk to, friendly. He stopped doing *Tarzan* (not enough loot) and is now a comics editor for King Features—and does DC stuff on the side. Small world, isn't it?

Spoke to John Celardo and he was thrilled over the "Stats" thing I did about him. He said he got at least a dozen calls from friends and relatives out here who get the paper. So, I guess the "Stats" thing is doing okay—somebody's reading it.

By coincidence, my former sister-in-law worked at one of the colleges on Staten Island. She turned out to be a big fan of the strip. Strange as it might sound, she was actually impressed that I knew the artist. In any event, I think Morisi had a wider (and more appreciative) audience than he realized.

**IN 1986 DC ANNOUNCED** plans to publish a weekly comic book magazine featuring the 1960s Charlton action-hero characters: Thunderbolt, Blue Beetle, Peacemaker, Judomaster, and Captain Atom. The format would have featured each character in two- or three-page installments, almost like an old-fashioned Sunday newspaper strip. Morisi's story line involved Peter Cannon returning to the Himalayas

following the death of the High Abbot, to face his old adversary "The Hooded One." I had seen a sample of Morisi's first installment, which looked very similar to his 1960s work. After waiting so many years to draw the character again, Morisi, understandably, agonized over the details.

> As far as my progress on T-bolt—there ain't any. Pages 7 and 8 have been completed for over a week now, and I'm still at a standstill. I try, every day, but as a rule I come up empty. I will try again and again, until I get it right. This is the best deal I've ever had . . . and I refuse to blow it. Maybe the above thought is making me uptight? Whatever the problem, I'm going to give it my best shot.
>
> Problems! My DC stuff has been put on the back burner for the time being. The comic shops and distributors decided they would have to lay out too much money (three months up front) and gamble that a weekly book would sell. The risk was too great, so they said NO! (Don't these people think things out ahead of time?) Dick Giordano is upset. DC has $27,000 invested and they're upset, too. Dick will try to incorporate my 18 pages of finished art into another book, if that's possible. As for me, there might be a T-Bolt mini-series in the works . . . if the powers that be give their okay. If not, I'll go back to walking my dog. We'll see.

I have no idea whatever became of that finished 18-page Thunderbolt adventure. To the best of my knowledge it was never published. I hope the originals have survived and entertain a fervent hope that the story will one day see publication.

Chances are, however, that it won't be at DC. In the wake of the aborted project, DC attempted to expropriate (for lack of a more polite word) the publishing rights to Thunderbolt. Their official position was that when Morisi accepted payment for his unpublished work, he signed away all rights to the character. Needless to say, Morisi disagreed. It became an uncomfortable predicament for him. He discovered that fighting a major publisher was not far removed from fighting city hall. Finally, after a considerable amount of sabre-rattling, Morisi and DC reached an agreement enabling DC to begin the 1992–93 publication of *Peter Cannon—Thunderbolt.*

After waiting twenty-five years for a new Thunderbolt series, I found the new magazine a disappointment. By my way of thinking, it had all the charm of ketchup stain on a lovely new silk tie. It was written and drawn by someone named Mike Collins, who seemed to have little understanding of the character. The magazine slowly went from bad to worse. It was no great surprise that the title failed to develop a significant following and was discontinued after the twelfth issue. As if driven by morbid curiosity, I read every issue, hoping for better things. It never happened. By the end I felt relieved to see it go. I can only imagine how Morisi must have felt.

Later DC, in its infinite wisdom, decided that Thunderbolt had no commercial value. Out of the kindness of their hearts (if you will pardon the sarcasm) the DC powers returned the rights to Morisi. I say this sincerely believing that DC would not have demonstrated such lavish generosity had the new magazine been a hit at the box office.

**MUCH OF THIS INFORMATION** about Morisi's struggle with DC over Thunderbolt came to me from a mutual acquaintance a few years after the fact, as I was not present to hear it first-hand. The reason for this is that my friendship with Morisi came to an end in the summer of 1987. I could offer a number of explanations, none of which are of any real importance now. I will say, however, that even the best of friendships sometimes end due to a simple misunderstanding, with neither party being at fault. Upon reflection, I think this was the case with Morisi and me. Under different circumstances, we might have been able to resolve the dispute had it been his wish or mine. Unfortunately, it was not. Harsh words had been spoken in anger, which further complicated matters. With backs turned, our lives drifted in different directions and we never spoke again.

As the years passed and the anger of the moment began to slowly dissipate, I felt some regret that I had not made an effort to resolve our differences. Several times I was tempted to pick up the phone or write a short note, to wish him well if nothing else. Each time, I managed to suppress the urge until it passed. I guess stubborn pride, as much as anything, prevented me from extending the proverbial olive branch. Now it is too late. If it were possible to speak to Morisi at this much-belated date, I would probably tell him how much his friendship had meant to me and how sorry I am that things ended so badly between us. I wish it could have been different.

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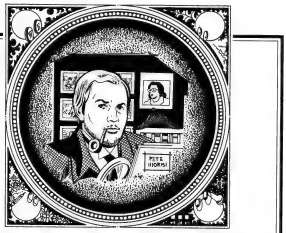


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# with PEN and BRUSH

by HOWARD LEROY DAVIS

[**Ed. note:** *The following interview-profile of Pete Morisi was originally published in* The Menomonee Falls Gazette *#145, Sept. 23, 1974. As such, it was one of a very few articles about Morisi published during his working comics career. Howard Leroy Davis has dusted it off for this exclusive reprint in* Charlton Spotlight.]

# PAM

**GENTLEMEN COME IN** all sizes and shapes. PAM is one of the large economy size.

And a modest man as well. Through our exchange of letters PAM twice refused to be interviewed . . . but fortunately I cornered him in the Charlton Room at the 1974 New York Comic Art Convention.

Even cornered, PAM still tried to talk me out of doing an article on him. "Why write about me? I just do a copy of George Tuska art."

I didn't buy that because I know better. PAM's art has a classical Beaux Arts quality quite different from Tuska's action-oriented work. PAM's crisply defined black forms create a mood within his work which is uniquely his own.

The Tuska-esque quality of PAM's figures is not an accident, however. Years ago (over twenty-five, I figure from early samples of PAM's work), PAM was told by an editor . . . who shall remain nameless . . . that his work was unacceptable.

PAM said, "So what do I have to do to be acceptable?"

The nameless editor grabbed a page of Tuska work and pushed it at PAM. "If you could draw like this . . ."

PAM looked at the art and said, "Sure, sure, I can do that."

And he did. He studied George Tuska's work. Practiced his hand in it. And then, in a characteristically PAM act, he contacted George Tuska, told him of the situation, and asked if Tuska minded PAM working in the same style. Tuska didn't mind.

PAM found himself comfortable in the chosen style. Despite his protestation, it is as much his as Tuska's . . . after over twenty years of use.

PAM has experimented with other styles. In recent years, he used photos, projectors, etc., and tried moving toward the more realist work typically used today by John Prentice and Al Williamson. He did not find himself comfortable in this Realistic style and has returned to the more Stylized page and figure design.

PAM works on two-ply kid-finish illustration board. He uses 2H pencils to lay out directly on the final board. (2H because he has a damp basement studio. He says he'll move to the drier second floor when his three kids leave home.) He composes his work naturally . . . no system. PAM inks with Winsor & Newton series 7 brushes, #3 size, and fountain pen. (The finished work was primarily by pen when Realistic; primarily by brush when Stylized.) Mistakes are corrected by white paint or razor.

I thought PAM's favorite past work would be Thunderbolt, which he wrote and drew. He says it's one of his favorites, but his top favorite is Johnny Dynamite. He drew (and wrote most of) the tales of Johnny Dynamite, a hard-boiled private eye (who looked like John Garfield) over twenty years ago. J.D. was published by a company that Charlton bought out, so we assume that Charlton owns the rights. Is anyone ready for Son of Johnny Dynamite?

Because of a unique personal situation, PAM has not produced much in the past two years, but that will change soon . . . and with that change we hope we'll see more of PAM in our comic books.

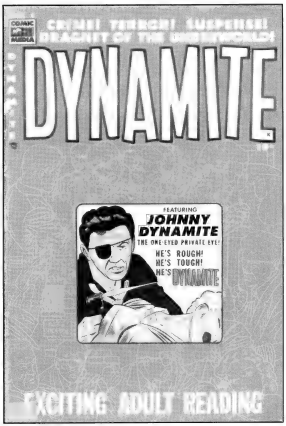
*© 2005 Howard Leroy Davis*

This Thunderbolt tableau appeared in **CPL** #9-10, 1974, *aka* the **Charlton Portfolio.** Courtesy of Bob Layton & CPL/Gang. Thunderbolt TM & © 2005 Estate of Peter A. Morisi.

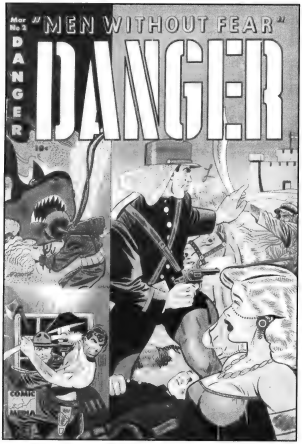
# THE PAIII GALLERY

**Weird Terror** #5, May 1953. © Comic Media.

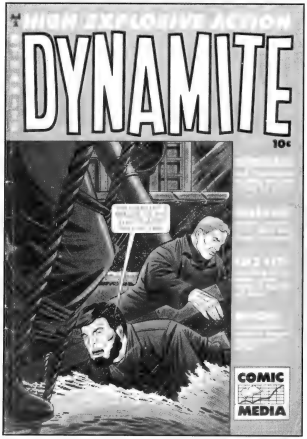
**Crime Does Not Pay** #142, Feb. 1955. © Lev Gleason Ent. Corp.




**Dynamite** #8, July 1954. © Comic Media.

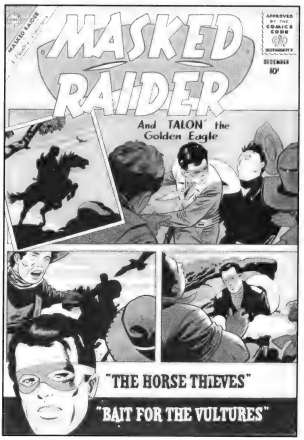



**Danger** #2, Mar. 1953. © Comic Media.

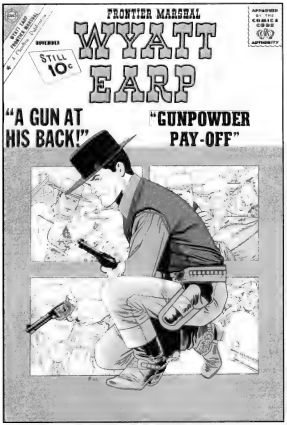



**Dynamite** #2, July 1953. © Comic Media.

**Strange Stories of Suspense** #11, Oct. 1956. © 2005 Marvel Characters, Inc.

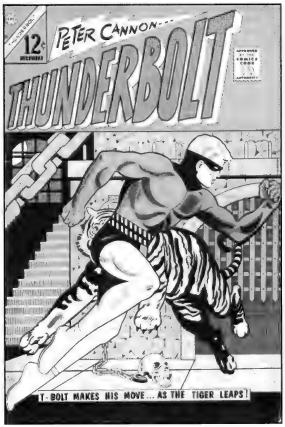



**Masked Raider** #27, Dec. 1960. © Charlton Comics Group.

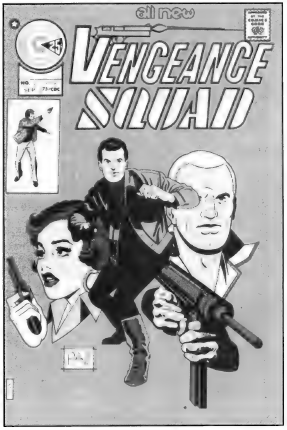



**Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal** #39, Nov. 1961. © Charlton Comics Group.

**Thunderbolt** #51, Mar. 1966. © Charlton Comics Group.




**Thunderbolt** #55, Dec. 1966. © Charlton Comics Group.




**Vengeance Squad** #2, May 1975. © Charlton Comics Group.

# The Pete Morisi Charlton Index

Compiled by Michael Ambrose, with input from Val Morisi, Ramon Schenk, and Frank Motler; some data supplied by the Grand Comic Book Database project (**www.comics.org**). Additions & corrections welcome. All images © Charlton Comics Group.

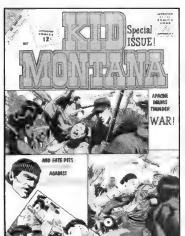
| TITLE | ISSUE | DATE | FEATURE | PAGES | NOTES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attack | 5 | May 72 | Second Effort | 1 | Japanese jets!? |
| Attack | 14 | May 73 | The G.I.'s Medal | 1 | |
| Attack | 44 | Jan 84 | The G.I.'s Medal | 1 | reps Attack 14, 5-73 |
| Battlefield Action | 35 | Apr 61 | Heydrick Shall Not Die | 7 | |
| Billy the Kid | 11 | Feb 58 | Three Headed Trouble | 5 | Billy the Kid |
| Billy the Kid | 11 | Feb 58 | Tailor-Made Bad Man | 5 | |
| Billy the Kid | 11 | Feb 58 | Baby Faced Terror | 5 | Billy the Kid |
| Billy the Kid | 12 | Jun 58 | No More Notches | 5 | |
| Billy the Kid | 12 | Jun 58 | Chained Gun Lightning | 7 | |
| Billy the Kid | 14 | Nov 58 | Quiet Town | | |
| Billy the Kid | 14 | Nov 58 | Gentleman's Wager | | |
| Billy the Kid | 14 | Nov 58 | No Limit Game | | |
| Billy the Kid | 15 | Feb 59 | Come an' Get Me, Garret | 5 | Origin of Billy the Kid |
| Billy the Kid | 15 | Feb 59 | Homecoming | 6 | not BtK; not same as Texas Rangers 72 |
| Billy the Kid | 17 | Jun 59 | Rio Grande Payoff | 7 | |
| Billy the Kid | 17 | Jun 59 | Billy the Kid and the Shotgun Brothers | 8 | |
| Billy the Kid | 18 | Aug 59 | The Scared Squatter | 5 | cov |
| Billy the Kid | 19 | Feb 59 | On the Run | 8 | Billy the Kid |
| Billy the Kid | 19 | Feb 59 | A Blood Rite | 5 | Billy the Kid |
| Billy the Kid | 26 | Jan-60 | Viva El Chivito | 5 | |
| Billy the Kid | 26 | Jan-60 | Death's Dancers | 7 | |
| Billy the Kid | 27 | Mar 61 | Uncle Pedro's Revenge | 5 | |
| Billy the Kid | 30 | Sep 61 | The Escape | | |
| Billy the Kid | 42 | Oct 63 | [unknown] | | |
| Billy the Kid | 42 | Oct 63 | Hired Gun | 5 | not Billy the Kid |
| Billy the Kid | 53 | Dec 65 | I Promise You Death | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Billy the Kid | 79 | Jul 70 | The Vigilante War | 9 | Kid Montana |
| Billy the Kid | 95 | Oct 72 | Vigilante Law | 1 | |
| Career Girl Romances | 64 | Aug 71 | Greener Grass | 1 | |
| Cheyenne Kid | 11 | Feb 58 | Bronc-Stomper | 5 | 68-pg giant |
| Cheyenne Kid | 15 | Jan 59 | Renegade's Return | 5 | |
| Cheyenne Kid | 16 | Mar 59 | Dead Shot | 3 | |
| Cheyenne Kid | 26 | Jan-60 | Trade with the Indians | 5 | |
| Cheyenne Kid | 27 | Mar 61 | Bad Medicine | 5 | cov |
| Cody of the Pony Express | 8 | Oct 55 | Cody of the Pony Express | 23 | pt pencils, inks in pts 1&2 |
| Danger | 13 | Aug 55 | The Cruel Sea | 7 | |
| Danger | 14 | Oct 55 | Sandhog | 7 | reps Danger 1 [Comic Media] |
| Danger | 14 | Oct 55 | Fire Fighter | 7 | reps Danger 3 [Comic Media] |
| Danger and Adventure | 23 | Apr 55 | Skipper Hoy and That Wreck, the Hesperus | 4 | reps Feature Pres. Mag. 6, 6-50 [Fox] |
| Death Valley | 9 | Aug 55 | Sleepy Time Six-Shooters | 6 | Bart Wade, Pony Exp.; pt pencils, inks |
| Fightin' Army | 99 | Sep 71 | The Medal I Didn't Deserve | 6 | cov fr mt pans |
| Fightin' Army | 100 | Nov 71 | The Superman's Last Battle | 6 | |
| Fightin' Army | 163 | Apr 83 | The Medal I Didn't Deserve | 6 | reps Fightin' Army 99, 9-71 |
| Fightin' Marines | 135 | Feb 78 | The Night the Capitol Burned | 1 | reps ??? |
| Flash Gordon | 16 | Oct 69 | The Real Enemy | 5 | |
| For Lovers Only | 67 | Oct 72 | A Kiss Before I Leave | 8 | |
| Ghostly Haunts | 20 | Sep 71 | Don't Tread on Me | 7 | |
| Ghostly Haunts | 24 | Apr 72 | The Fourth Guest | 8 | |
| Ghostly Haunts | 25 | Jun 72 | Where Are They Now? | 8 | |
| Ghostly Haunts | 26 | Aug 73 | Why Won't They Listen to Me? | 7 | |
| Ghostly Haunts | 29 | Jan 73 | The Pact of Satan | 8 | |
| Ghostly Haunts | 36 | Nov 73 | Snowman | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |
| Ghostly Haunts | 37 | Jan 74 | Surprise | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |
| Ghostly Haunts | 45 | Jul 75 | Executioner | 8 | plot-Steve Morisi |
| Ghostly Haunts | 46 | Oct 75 | Quite a Bargain | 7 | scr-Molloy |
| Ghostly Tales | 83 | Dec 70 | All But One Room | 7 | |
| Ghostly Tales | 84 | Feb 71 | Cowardice Revisited | 8 | |
| Ghostly Tales | 86 | Jun 71 | Return to Die | 7 | |
| Ghostly Tales | 90 | Nov 71 | The Pendant | 7 | |
| Ghostly Tales | 93 | Mar 72 | The Kept Promise | 7 | |
| Ghostly Tales | 94 | Apr 72 | The Night of the Laughing Wolf | 8 | |

**For Lovers Only** #67, Oct. 1972

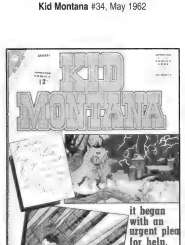
**Gunmaster** #86, Nov. 1965

**Intriga** #1, Jan. 1957 (ENS; Mexico ed

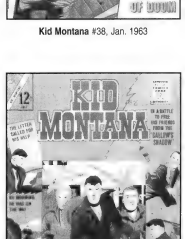
| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ghostly Tales | 102 | Feb 73 | The Eye of Evil | 7 | |
| Ghostly Tales | 103 | Apr 73 | The Beautiful Doll | 7 | |
| Ghostly Tales | 105 | Jul 73 | The Souvenir Hunter | 7 | scr-Gill |
| Ghostly Tales | 109 | Jan 74 | Hocus Pocus | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |
| Ghostly Tales | 115 | May 75 | The Not So Great Escape | 8 | scr-Randy Heaps |
| Ghostly Tales | 132 | Oct 78 | Hey Dad, Look | 7 | reps Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves 32, 6-72 |
| Ghostly Tales | 133 | Jan 79 | The Beautiful Doll | 7 | reps Ghostly Tales 103, 4-73 |
| Ghostly Tales | 138 | Sep 79 | The Souvenir Hunter | 7 | reps Ghostly Tales 105, 7-73 |
| Ghostly Tales | 140 | Dec 79 | The Not So Great Escape | 8 | reps Ghostly Tales 115, 5-75 |
| Ghostly Tales | 148 | Apr 81 | The Night of the Laughing Wolf | 7 | reps Ghostly Tales 94, 4-72 |
| Ghostly Tales | 156 | Aug 82 | Don't Tread on Me | 7 | reps Ghostly Haunts 20, 9-71 |
| Ghostly Tales | 159 | Feb 83 | Executioner | 8 | reps Ghostly Haunts 45, 7-75 |
| Ghost Manor (1st series) | 17 | Mar 71 | Well, Hello Dolly | 7 | |
| Ghost Manor (2d series) | 3 | Feb 72 | Homeward Bound | 7 | |
| Ghost Manor | 6 | Aug 72 | Echo of the Last War Whoop | 8 | |
| Ghost Manor | 7 | Oct 72 | The Way of the Werewolf | 7 | |
| Ghost Manor | 9 | Feb 73 | Remember Me? | 7 | |
| Ghost Manor | 13 | Jul 73 | Seekers of Evil | 8 | scr-Gill |
| Ghost Manor | 14 | Sep 73 | Turnabout | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |
| Ghost Manor | 24 | Jul 75 | The Curse of Scorpio | 6 | scr-Gill |
| Ghost Manor | 32 | Dec 76 | Guest of Honor | 8 | scr-Gill |
| Ghost Manor | 37 | May 78 | Well, Hello Dolly | 7 | reps Ghost Manor (1st) 17, 3-71 |
| Ghost Manor | 42 | Mar 79 | Remember Me? | 7 | reps Ghost Manor 8, 2-73 |
| Ghost Manor | 57 | Jul 81 | The Way of the Werewolf | 7 | reps Ghost Manor 7, 10-72 |
| Ghost Manor | 63 | Jun 82 | Guest of Honor | 8 | reps Ghost Manor 32, 12-76 |
| Ghost Manor | 64 | Sep 82 | The Curse of Scorpio | 6 | reps Ghost Manor 24, 7-75 |
| Ghost Manor | 69 | Jul 83 | Echo of the Last War Whoop | 8 | reps Ghost Manor 6, 8-72 |
| Ghost Manor | 74 | May 84 | All But One Room | 7 | reps Ghostly Tales 83, 12-70 |
| Gunfighters | 53 | Jun 79 | Apache Lore | 2 | reps ??? |
| Gunfighters | 54 | Jul 79 | Tyrant Guns | | reps Six-Gun Heroes 48, 9-58 |
| Gunfighters | 58 | Jan 80 | Dangerous Territory | 5 | Lash LaRue; reps Six-Gun Heroes 49, 12-58 |
| Gunfighters | 59 | Mar 80 | Flame Canyon | 6 | reps Masked Raider 21, 12-59 |
| Gunfighters | 60 | May 80 | Origin of the Kid | 10 | reps Kid Montana 32 |
| Gunfighters | 61 | Jul 80 | The King's Ransom | 2 | Wyatt Earp; reps Masked Raider 21, 12-59 |
| Gunfighters | 61 | Jul 80 | Kid Montana, Gunfighter | 10 | reps Kid Montana 32 |
| Gunfighters | 62 | Sep 80 | Gunsmoke Ranch Justice | 5 | reps Masked Raider 21, 12-59 |
| Gunfighters | 63 | Nov 80 | 1/2 Share of Murder | 5 | reps Masked Raider 28 |
| Gunfighters | 64 | Jan 81 | Gunfighters Three | 10 | reps Kid Montana 34, 5-62 |
| Gunfighters | 65 | Mar 81 | Against the Elements | 10 | reps Kid Montana 50, 3-65; cov fr int pan |
| Gunfighters | 66 | May 81 | Get the Kid | 10 | reps Kid Montana 50, 3-65 |
| Gunfighters | 67 | Jul 81 | The Gold Rush | 3 | reps Kid Montana 34, 5-62 |
| Gunfighters | 67 | Jul 81 | Geronimo's Attack | 10 | reps Kid Montana 34, 5-62 |
| Gunfighters | 68 | Aug 81 | Jaws of Death | 10 | reps Kid Montana 37 |
| Gunfighters | 68 | Aug 81 | The Shoot Out | 3 | reps Kid Montana 37 |
| Gunfighters | 69 | Oct 81 | Renegade Ambush | 10 | reps Kid Montana 37 |
| Gunfighters | 70 | Dec 81 | Trouble in Bonanza | 4 | Lash LaRue; reps 6-Gunfi 55, 2-60 |
| Gunfighters | 71 | Feb 82 | Draw or...Crawl! | 6 | Wyatt Earp; reps ??? |
| Gunfighters | 75 | Oct 82 | The Man Called Loco | 9 | reps Texas Rangers in Action ??? |
| Gunfighters | 77 | Feb 82 | Dead Man's Daughter | 9 | reps Outlaws of the West 68 |
| Gunmaster | 84 | Jul 65 | Get That Gold | 10 | Gunmaster |
| Gunmaster | 84 | Jul 65 | The Brains | 10 | Gunmaster; inks-Mastroserio |
| Gunmaster | 85 | Sep 65 | Dangerous Journey | 10 | Gunmaster |
| Gunmaster | 85 | Sep 65 | Trouble on the River | 10 | Gunmaster |
| Gunmaster | 86 | Nov 65 | The Kingmaker; The Raid; The Abdication | 20 | Gunmaster; cov |
| Haunted | 3 | Jan 72 | The Power and the Glory | 7 | |
| Haunted | 7 | Aug 72 | Don't Get Involved | 7 | |
| Haunted | 11 | Feb 73 | The Hunt for Clovis Dobbs | 6 | |
| Haunted | 13 | Jul 73 | Wrong Turn | 8 | scr-Cuti |
| Haunted | 17 | Jul 74 | Greed | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |
| Haunted | 19 | Dec 74 | The Unholy | 8 | plot-Steve Morisi |
| Haunted | 23 | Sep 75 | The Devil Is in Town | 9 | scr-Gill |
| Haunted | 33 | Dec 77 | Summer People | 8 | scr-Gill |
| Haunted | 41 | Mar 79 | Wrong Turn | 8 | reps Haunted 13, 7-73 |
| Haunted | 48 | Mar 80 | The Power and the Glory | 7 | reps Haunted 3, 1-72 |
| Haunted | 50 | Jul 80 | The Wolves of Dark Mountain | 7 | reps Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves 29, 12-71 |
| Haunted | 53 | Jan 81 | A Child's Voice | 7 | reps Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves 31, 4-72 |
| Haunted | 55 | May 81 | The Unholy | 8 | reps Haunted 19, 12-74 |
| Haunted | 61 | Apr 82 | Greed | 8 | reps Haunted 17, 7-74; cov |
| Haunted | 65 | Dec 82 | The Sea—Its Givings...and Takings | 4 | reps Monster Hunters 1, 8-75 |
| Haunted | 67 | Apr 83 | Strangler on the Loose | 8 | reps Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves 40, 7-73 |




Kid Montana #34, May 1962




Kid Montana #38, Jan. 1963




Kid Montana #41, July 1963

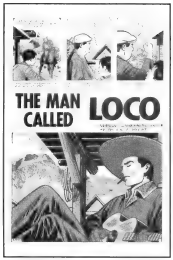
| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Haunted | 69 | Sep 83 | Don't Get Involved | 7 | reps Haunted 7, 8-72 |
| Haunted Love | 8 | Mar 75 | Killer Wolves | 8 | scr-PAM |
| Hollywood Romances | 54 | Aug 70 | The In Crowd | 1 | |
| Hollywood Romances | 58 | Apr 71 | Screen Test | 5 | |
| I Love You | 90 | Mar 71 | A Sanctuary for the Heart | 7 | |
| I Love You | 93 | Sep 71 | Another Kind of Love | 4 | |
| I Love You | 99 | Sep 72 | Someone to Share the View | 7 | |
| Johnny Dynamite | 10 | Jun 55 | Vengeance Be Mine | 12 | cov |
| Johnny Dynamite | 11 | Aug 55 | The Secret Agent from New York | 7 | not JD; retitled fr Danger 6 [Comic Media] |
| Johnny Dynamite | 11 | Aug 55 | Poison Jasmine | 6 | |
| Johnny Dynamite | 11 | Aug 55 | part cover | | |
| Judomaster | 90 | Aug 66 | The Roof of the World...Where Thunderbolt Was Born | 2 | Thunderbolt filler |
| Just Married | 78 | Aug 71 | I Can't Tell Him | 5 | |
| Kid Montana | 13 | Jul 58 | Gunman in Town | 5 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 15 | Nov 58 | The Price of Treason | 6 | Texas Rangers |
| Kid Montana | 16 | Feb 59 | Top Hand | 5 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 16 | Feb 59 | Calaboose Combine | 5 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 16 | Feb 59 | Don't Call Me Saddle-Tramp | 5 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 31 | Oct 61 | Hidden Guns | | |
| Kid Montana | 31 | Oct 61 | Apache Ambush | | |
| Kid Montana | 32 | Dec 61 | Origin of the Kid | 10 | cov fr int pans; scr-PAM #32-39 |
| Kid Montana | 32 | Dec 61 | Kid Montana, Gunfighter | 10 | |
| Kid Montana | 33 | Feb 62 | Hidden Death | | cov fr int pans |
| Kid Montana | 33 | Feb 62 | White Fury | | |
| Kid Montana | 34 | May 62 | The Gold Rush | 3 | |
| Kid Montana | 34 | May 62 | Geronimo's Attack | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 34 | May 62 | Gunfighters Three | 10 | Kid Montana; cov fr int pans |
| Kid Montana | 35 | Jul 62 | The Snow Monster | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 35 | Jul 62 | Bandit Vengeance | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 35 | Jul 62 | The Pony Express | 3 | filler |
| Kid Montana | 36 | Sep 62 | Desert Fury | 10 | cov fr int pans |
| Kid Montana | 36 | Sep 62 | The Dawn World | 10 | |
| Kid Montana | 36 | Sep 62 | A Man Called Wyatt | 3 | |
| Kid Montana | 37 | Nov 62 | Renegade Ambush | 10 | Gunfighters Three |
| Kid Montana | 37 | Nov 62 | The Shoot Out | 3 | not KM |
| Kid Montana | 37 | Nov 62 | Jaws of Death | 10 | |
| Kid Montana | 38 | Jan 63 | Draw or Die | 3 | |
| Kid Montana | 38 | Jan 63 | Chamber of Doom | 20 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 38 | Jan 63 | Jungle of Death | 10 | Kid Montana; cov fr int pans |
| Kid Montana | 39 | Mar 63 | The Killer Apes | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 39 | Mar 63 | The Avenging Idol | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 39 | Mar 63 | The Quiet Tenderfoot | 3 | |
| Kid Montana | 40 | May 63 | Black Arrow | 10 | cov fr int pans |
| Kid Montana | 40 | May 63 | Hard Times | 5 | |
| Kid Montana | 40 | May 63 | Too Many Wolves | 6 | |
| Kid Montana | 41 | Jul 63 | The Gallow's Shadow | 10 | cov fr int pans |
| Kid Montana | 41 | Jul 63 | Her Hero | 10 | |
| Kid Montana | 41 | Jul 63 | The Desert's Treasure | 5 | not KM |
| Kid Montana | 42 | Sep 63 | A Friendly Little Game | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 42 | Sep 63 | The Clay Pigeon | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 43 | Nov 63 | Outlaw Chief | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 43 | Nov 63 | Chase the Westers | 5 | |
| Kid Montana | 43 | Nov 63 | First on a Killer's List | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 44 | Jan 64 | The Witness | 10 | Kid Montana; cov fr int pans |
| Kid Montana | 44 | Jan 64 | The Ghost Riders | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 45 | Mar 64 | Champagne Caviar and Bushwhack Bullets | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 45 | Mar 64 | Nugget Valley | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 46 | Jun 64 | Blizzard Bushwhacker | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 46 | Jun 64 | Month of Trouble | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 47 | Aug 64 | The Hostage | | |
| Kid Montana | 47 | Aug 64 | New King of Brimstone | | |
| Kid Montana | 48 | Nov 64 | Hard Luck Harry | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 48 | Nov 64 | Blood Feud | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 49 | Jan 65 | The Trouble Man | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 49 | Jan 65 | The Gentle Sex | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 50 | Mar 65 | Against the Elements | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Kid Montana | 50 | Mar 65 | Get the Kid | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Lash LaRue Western | 69 | Sep 58 | Blood Is Thicker | 5 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 70 | Dec 58 | Behind a Sixgun | 5 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 70 | Dec 58 | Double Deal | 5 | |

**Lash LaRue Western** #75, Nov. 19

**Lash LaRue Western** #81, Dec. 19

**Outlaws of the West** #71, Sept. 19

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lash LaRue Western | 71 | Feb 59 | Outlaw Lead | 5 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 72 | May 59 | Miracle of the Whip | 5 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 72 | May 59 | Bandidos | 5 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 72 | May 59 | Horse Thief's Hunch | 5 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 73 | Jul 59 | Showdown at Quinto | 9 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 74 | Sep 59 | Renegade Attack | 7 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 74 | Sep 59 | Pursuit of Generous John | 10 | cov |
| Lash LaRue Western | 75 | Nov 59 | The Outcasts | 6 | cov fr int pans |
| Lash LaRue Western | 75 | Nov 59 | Whiplash | 2 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 75 | Nov 59 | The Man Who Hated Outlaws | 8 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 76 | Jan 60 | Wanted Dead or Alive | 8 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 76 | Jan 60 | Lawman | 5 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 76 | Jan 60 | Draw Friend | 6 | cov |
| Lash LaRue Western | 77 | Mar 60 | Branded | 5 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 77 | Mar 60 | Shadow of the Gunman | 5 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 77 | Mar 60 | Blonde Bushwhacker | 7 | cov |
| Lash LaRue Western | 78 | Jun 60 | The Banker's Special | 5 | cov fr int pans |
| Lash LaRue Western | 78 | Jun 60 | Payment on the Prairie | 7 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 78 | Jun 60 | Home Made Hero | 5 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 79 | Aug 60 | The Scorpion's Nest | 5 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 79 | Aug 60 | Puma on the Prowl | 5 | cov |
| Lash LaRue Western | 80 | Oct 60 | The Fallen Star | 5 | Lash LaRue |
| Lash LaRue Western | 80 | Oct 60 | Ambushcade | 5 | Lash LaRue |
| Lash LaRue Western | 80 | Oct 60 | Scoundrel with a Badge | 5 | Lash LaRue; cov fr int pans |
| Lash LaRue Western | 80 | Oct 60 | Flaming Vengeance | 5 | Lash LaRue |
| Lash LaRue Western | 81 | Dec 60 | Gun Bounty | 5 | Lash LaRue |
| Lash LaRue Western | 81 | Dec 60 | Winchester Welcome | 5 | Lash LaRue; cov fr int pans |
| Lash LaRue Western | 81 | Dec 60 | The Marshal's Protege | 5 | Lash LaRue |
| Lash LaRue Western | 82 | Feb 61 | The Last Ambush | 5 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 82 | Feb 61 | Appeal From a Pair of Dice | 8 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 82 | Feb 61 | The Gentle Whirlwind | 5 | cov fr int pans |
| Lash LaRue Western | 84 | Jun 61 | Stand Off at Delhi | 5 | |
| Lash LaRue Western | 84 | Jun 61 | The Fastest Gun | 5 | |
| Love Diary | 68 | Sep 70 | The Man-Wrecker | 5 | |
| Love Diary | 69 | Nov 70 | The Name of the Game | 5 | part cov fr int pans |
| Love Diary | 73 | Jul 71 | Heartbreak Revisited | 10 | |
| Love Diary | 75 | Nov 71 | Paradise Revisited | 4 | |
| Love Diary | 78 | May 72 | These Modern Girls | 1 | |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 13 | Apr 69 | These Ghostly Powers | 4 | scr-Skeates |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 14 | Jun 69 | The Party Giver | 7 | |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 23 | Dec 70 | Share and Share Alike | 7 | |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 26 | Jun 71 | The Arrival of the Innocent | 8 | |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 28 | Oct 71 | The Only Way Out | 7 | |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 29 | Dec 71 | The Wolves of Dark Mountain | 7 | |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 31 | Apr 72 | A Child's Voice | 7 | |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 32 | Jun 72 | Hey Dad, Look | 7 | |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 39 | Jun 73 | The Blinding Glory | 8 | scr-Gill |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 40 | Jul 73 | Strangler on the Loose | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 46 | Jul 74 | Swamp | 8 | scr-Steve Morisi |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 58 | Aug 76 | Beauty Is Skin Deep | 1 | |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 62 | Oct 77 | Charm | 10 | scr-Cuti |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 63 | Feb 78 | Bridge to the Unknown | 8 | reps ??? |
| Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves | 67 | Jul 81 | Share and Share Alike | 7 | reps Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves 23, 12-70 |
| Masked Raider | 1 | ?-60 | Outside the Law | 5 | Blue Bird Comics prem. |
| Masked Raider | 1 | ?-60 | Stolen Watch | 5 | Blue Bird Comics prem. |
| Masked Raider | 1 | ?-60 | Caged Eagle | 5 | Blue Bird Comics prem. |
| Masked Raider | 1 | ?-60 | Free the Guilty | 5 | Blue Bird Comics prem. |
| Masked Raider | 6 | ?-60 | Trackdown | | Blue Bird Comics prem. |
| Masked Raider | 6 | ?-60 | Lawyer, Free Thyself | | Blue Bird Comics prem. |
| Masked Raider | 6 | ?-60 | Trail's End | | Blue Bird Comics prem. |
| Masked Raider | 7 | ?-60 | The Sonora Swindle | | Blue Bird Comics prem. |
| Masked Raider | 7 | ?-60 | Turnabout | | Blue Bird Comics prem. |
| Masked Raider | 7 | ?-60 | The Perfect Plan | | Blue Bird Comics prem. |
| Masked Raider | 10 | ?-60 | Tightrope of Fear | | Blue Bird Comics prem. |
| Masked Raider | 10 | ?-60 | 1/2 Share of Murder | | Blue Bird Comics prem. |
| Masked Raider | 14 | Aug 58 | Run for the Border | 5 | Billy the Kid |
| Masked Raider | 16 | Dec 58 | Double Ambush | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 16 | Dec 58 | The Winner Gets a Cell | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 16 | Dec 58 | Trail of the Eagle | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 17 | Mar 59 | Outside the Law | 5 | |




**Texas Rangers in Action** #66, June 1968

**Texas Rangers in Action** #77, Apr. 1970

**Thunderbolt** #52, June 1966

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Masked Raider | 17 | Mar 59 | Caged Eagle | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 17 | Mar 59 | Stolen Watch | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 17 | Mar 59 | Free the Guilty | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 18 | May 59 | Bushwhacker's Trail | 9 | |
| Masked Raider | 18 | May 59 | The Shotgun Army | 7 | |
| Masked Raider | 19 | Jul 59 | The Captives | 4 | |
| Masked Raider | 19 | Jul 59 | Violence in the Air | 6 | part cov fr int pans |
| Masked Raider | 20 | Oct 59 | Trapped in Knife Canyon | | cov fr int pans |
| Masked Raider | 20 | Oct 59 | Range Cook | | |
| Masked Raider | 20 | Oct 59 | The Survivor | | |
| Masked Raider | 21 | Dec 59 | 3 Got Away | 8 | |
| Masked Raider | 21 | Dec 59 | Flame Canyon | 6 | part cov fr int pans |
| Masked Raider | 21 | Dec 59 | Gunsmoke Ranch Justice | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 21 | Dec 59 | The King's Ransom | 2 | Wyatt Earp |
| Masked Raider | 22 | Feb 60 | Lawyer, Free Thyself | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 22 | Feb 60 | Trackdown | 7 | |
| Masked Raider | 22 | Feb 60 | Trail's End | 6 | cov |
| Masked Raider | 23 | Apr 60 | Dynamite Trail | | cov fr int pans |
| Masked Raider | 23 | Apr 60 | The Hero's Reward | | |
| Masked Raider | 23 | Apr 60 | War Medicine | | |
| Masked Raider | 24 | Jun 60 | Turnabout | | cov fr int pans |
| Masked Raider | 24 | Jun 60 | The Sonora Swindle | | |
| Masked Raider | 24 | Jun 60 | The Perfect Plan | | |
| Masked Raider | 25 | Aug 60 | A Date with Destiny | 7 | cov |
| Masked Raider | 25 | Aug 60 | The Unknown Friend | 7 | |
| Masked Raider | 25 | Aug 60 | Vigilante Terror | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 26 | Oct 60 | Bushwhacked Romance | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 26 | Oct 60 | Doubled Danger | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 26 | Oct 60 | Rustler's Snare | 5 | cov fr int pans |
| Masked Raider | 26 | Oct 60 | The Prize Is Death | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 27 | Dec 60 | Bank Robber | 5 | cov fr int pans |
| Masked Raider | 27 | Dec 60 | Bait for the Vultures | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 27 | Dec 60 | The Horse Thieves | 7 | |
| Masked Raider | 28 | Feb 61 | Tightrope of Fear | | cov fr int pans |
| Masked Raider | 28 | Feb 61 | 1/2 Share of Murder | | |
| Masked Raider | 30 | Jun 61 | The Unfair Sex | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 30 | Jun 61 | Track of the Cat | 5 | |
| Masked Raider | 30 | Jun 61 | Trial by Fury | 5 | cov fr int pans |
| Maverick Marshal | 2 | Jan 59 | The Gibbons Boy | 5 | not Maverick Marshal |
| Monster Hunters | 1 | Aug 75 | The Sea—Its Givings...and Takings | 4 | scr-Molloy |
| Monster Hunters | 1 | ?-77 | The Sea—Its Givings...and Takings | 4 | Modern Comics rep 1977 |
| Outlaws of the West | 15 | Jun 58 | He Stands Alone | 5 | |
| Outlaws of the West | 15 | Jun 58 | Brand of the Gunman | 6 | |
| Outlaws of the West | 16 | Sep 58 | Water War | 5 | |
| Outlaws of the West | 17 | Nov 58 | Gunmen | 6 | |
| Outlaws of the West | 17 | Nov 58 | Happy Jack | 4 | |
| Outlaws of the West | 17 | Nov 58 | Trail at Bulletproof | 5 | |
| Outlaws of the West | 17 | Nov 58 | Trouble's Twin | 5 | |
| Outlaws of the West | 18 | Jan 59 | Gun in His Hand | 5 | |
| Outlaws of the West | 18 | Jan 59 | Pinned Down | 2 | |
| Outlaws of the West | 41 | Feb 63 | The Santa Fe Trail | 3 | |
| Outlaws of the West | 45 | Oct 63 | Camp of the Comancheros | 5 | |
| Outlaws of the West | 48 | May 64 | One Share of Murder | | |
| Outlaws of the West | 53 | May 65 | The Stolen Horse | | |
| Outlaws of the West | 54 | Jul 65 | Tompkins' Tunnel | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Outlaws of the West | 68 | Jan 68 | Dead Man's Daughter | 9 | Kid Montana |
| Outlaws of the West | 69 | May 68 | The Man Who Ran Yellow Flats | 9 | Kid Montana |
| Outlaws of the West | 70 | Jul 68 | Ride Into Trouble | 9 | Kid Montana |
| Outlaws of the West | 71 | Sep 68 | The Blizzard | 9 | Kid Montana; cov fr int pans |
| Outlaws of the West | 72 | Nov 68 | Incident at Devil's Creek | 9 | Kid Montana |
| Outlaws of the West | 73 | Jan 69 | The Wrong Man | 9 | Kid Montana; cov fr int pans |
| Outlaws of the West | 74 | Mar 69 | One Man's Death | 9 | Kid Montana; cov fr int pans |
| Outlaws of the West | 75 | May 69 | The Bust-Out Brothers | 10 | Captain Doom |
| Outlaws of the West | 75 | May 69 | The Killer's Reward | 9 | Kid Montana; cov |
| Outlaws of the West | 76 | Jul 69 | The Bride Is Death | 9 | Kid Montana; cov fr int pans |
| Outlaws of the West | 77 | Sep 69 | The Centro-City Bank Job | 10 | Kid Montana |
| Outlaws of the West | 78 | Nov 69 | Death of a Hired Gun | 8 | Kid Montana; cov fr int pans |
| Outlaws of the West | 79 | Jan 70 | The Endless Trail | 8 | Kid Montana; cov fr int pans |
| Outlaws of the West | 79 | ?-78 | The Endless Trail | 8 | Modern Comics rep 1978 |
| Outlaws of the West | 80 | Mar 70 | Wyler's Share | 9 | Kid Montana; part cov fr int pans |

**Thunderbolt** #53, Aug. 1966

**Thunderbolt** #54, Oct. 1966

**Thunderbolt** #56, Feb. 1967

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Outlaws of the West | 81 | May 70 | King of Stolen Valley | 9 | Kid Montana; cov fr int pans |
| Outlaws of the West | 85 | Nov 79 | Trouble's Twin | 5 | reps Outlaws of the West 17, 11-58 |
| Outlaws of the West | 85 | Nov 79 | Trail at Bulletproof | 5 | reps Outlaws of the West 17, 11-58 |
| Outlaws of the West | 85 | Nov 79 | Happy Jack | 4 | reps Outlaws of the West 17, 11-58 |
| Outlaws of the West | 86 | Jan 80 | Gunmen | 6 | reps Outlaws of the West 17, 11-58 |
| Outlaws of the West | 87 | Feb 80 | Tightrope of Fear | 8 | Kid Montana; reps ???; cov fr splash pan |
| Outlaws of the West | 88 | Apr 80 | 3 Got Away | 8 | reps Masked Raider 21, 12-59 |
| Phantom | 47 | Dec 71 | No Ghosts Here | 1 | |
| Rocky Lane's Blackjack | 22 | Mar 58 | The Last Draw | 6 | |
| Rocky Lane Western | 79 | Feb 58 | Jinxed Six Gun | 5 | |
| Romantic Story | 109 | Oct 70 | This Is the Way to Go | 5 | |
| Romantic Story | 110 | Dec 70 | The Swinger | 1 | |
| Romantic Story | 110 | Dec 70 | The Competition | 1 | |
| Romantic Story | 115 | Oct 71 | Please Let Me Go | 3 | |
| Romantic Story | 122 | Sep 72 | Who Will Know? | | |
| Rookie Cop | 27 | Nov 55 | High Bridge | 6 | reps Danger 3 [Comic Media] |
| Scary Tales | 2 | Oct 75 | Limited Visibility | 5 | scr-Molloy |
| Scary Tales | 17 | Dec 78 | Limited Visibility | 5 | reps Scary Tales 2, 10-75 |
| Scary Tales | 26 | May 81 | Seekers of Evil | 8 | reps Ghost Manor 13, 7-73 |
| Scary Tales | 30 | Jan 82 | Turnabout | 8 | reps Ghost Manor 14, 9-73 |
| Scary Tales | 32 | May 82 | Surprise | 8 | reps Ghostly Haunts 37, 1-74 |
| Scary Tales | 34 | Sep 82 | The Pendant | 7 | reps Ghostly Tales 90, 11-71 |
| Scary Tales | 41 | Nov 83 | Where Are They Now? | 8 | reps Ghostly Haunts 25, 6-72 |
| Secret Romance | 21 | Oct 72 | His Choice | | |
| Sheriff of Tombstone | 3 | Apr 59 | Billiard Wizard | 3 | |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 48 | Sep 58 | Tyrant Guns | 6 | |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 49 | Dec 58 | Dangerous Territory | 5 | |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 50 | Feb 59 | Gold | 3 | |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 51 | May 59 | Crossed Trails | 4 | |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 52 | Jul 59 | Big Gun | 5 | Lash LaRue |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 53 | Sep 59 | Drums of Battle | 7 | |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 54 | Nov 59 | Man-Made Stampede | 5 | |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 55 | Feb 60 | Trouble in Bonanza | 4 | Lash LaRue |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 64 | Aug 61 | Notches | 5 | |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 78 | Jan 64 | Gunmaster vs. Doctor Dynamite | 10 | Gunmaster |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 79 | Mar 64 | Gunmaster Finds Bullet the Gun Boy | 10 | |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 80 | Sep 64 | The Return of Doctor Dynamite | 10 | Gunmaster |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 81 | Nov 64 | The Day Gunmaster Shot Bullet | 10 | Gunmaster |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 82 | Jan 65 | Silks of Steel | 10 | Gunmaster |
| Six-Gun Heroes | 83 | Mar 65 | The Gatling Gun | 10 | Gunmaster |
| Soap Opera Love | 2 | Mar 83 | This Is the Way to Go | | reps Romantic Story 109, 10-70 |
| Sweethearts | 112 | Sep 70 | How Will He Know | 1 | |
| Sweethearts | 119 | Oct 71 | Who Will I Love Tomorrow? | 3 | |
| Sweethearts | 120 | Nov 71 | Good-Bye, Paradise | | |
| Sweethearts | 129 | Nov 72 | Lonely Tears | | |
| Teen Confessions | 75 | Aug 72 | My Choice | | |
| Teen-Age Love | 78 | Sep 71 | Mistletoe Magic | 1 | |
| Teen-Age Love | 85 | Jul 72 | The Forgotten One | 6 | |
| Teen-Age Love | 86 | Aug 72 | A Time to Goof | 1 | |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 12 | Jun 58 | You Are Bart Frisco | 7 | |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 12 | Jun 58 | The Original Horse Marines | 8 | |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 13 | Oct 58 | Pecos Law | 7 | |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 13 | Oct 58 | Ruined Ranger | 5 | |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 14 | Dec 58 | Robber's Rogues | | |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 16 | May 59 | The Owl Hoot Ranger | 5 | |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 16 | May 59 | The Harmless Ranger | 5 | |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 42 | Nov 63 | Trouble Man | 10 | Texas Rangers |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 43 | Jan 64 | Gallow's Trail | 10 | |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 65 | Mar 68 | The Man Called Loco | 8 | intro Man Called Loco; scr-O'Shaugnessy |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 66 | Jun 68 | The Man Called Loco | 9 | [only a gun] |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 67 | Aug 68 | The Man Called Loco | 9 | [origin] |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 68 | Oct 68 | The Man Called Loco | 9 | [gallows] |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 70 | Feb 69 | A Royal Visit | 8 | Man Called Loco |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 71 | Apr 69 | The Los Pinos Jailbreak | 7 | Man Called Loco; pt cov fr int pan |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 72 | Jun 69 | Homecoming | 8 | Man Called Loco; not same as BTK 15 |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 73 | Aug 69 | A World Full of Hungry Wolves | 8 | Man Called Loco; pt cov fr int pan |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 74 | Oct 69 | Tuttle's Silver Mountain | 8 | Man Called Loco |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 75 | Dec 69 | The Man Who Was Everybody's Friend | 8 | Man Called Loco; pt cov fr int pan |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 76 | Feb 70 | Guns of Evil | 9 | Man Called Loco |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 76 | ?-77 | Guns of Evil | 9 | Modern Comics rep 1977 |

**Vengeance Squad** #3, Nov. 1975

**Vengeance Squad** #4, Jan. 1976

**Vengeance Squad** #5, Mar. 1976

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Texas Rangers in Action | 77 | Apr 70 | Beyond the Law | 9 | Man Called Loco; pt cov fr int pan |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 78 | Jun 70 | Dead Man's Hand | 9 | last Man Called Loco |
| Texas Rangers in Action | 78 | Jun 70 | The Killer | 9 | not Man Called Loco |
| This Is Suspense | 25 | Jun 55 | Deep Death | 7 | reps Danger 2, 3-53 [Comic Media] |
| Thunderbolt | 1 | Jan 66 | Origin of an Avenger | 20 | cov; first issue |
| Thunderbolt | 51 | Mar 66 | The Evil That Is Evila | 20 | cov; formerly Son of Vulcan |
| Thunderbolt | 52 | Jun 66 | Gore, the Man-Ape | 20 | cov |
| Thunderbolt | 53 | Aug 66 | Enter...the Tong | 20 | cov; 1st letters page |
| Thunderbolt | 54 | Oct 66 | This One's for Tabu | 18 | cov |
| Thunderbolt | 55 | Dec 66 | Where Stalks the Mummy? | 15 | cov |
| Thunderbolt | 56 | Feb 67 | Beware...the Cobra | 15 | cov |
| Thunderbolt | 58 | Jul 67 | Encore: The Hooded One | 18 | cov; PAM's last T-Bolt |
| Thunderbolt | 58 | ?-78 | Encore: The Hooded One | 18 | Modern Comics rep 1978 |
| Thunderbolt | 59 | Sep 67 | cov only | | |
| Time for Love | 23 | Jul 71 | A Liberated Woman | 4 | |
| Time for Love | 29 | Jul 72 | The Quarrel | 1 | |
| Vengeance Squad | 2 | Sep 75 | The Informer | 16 | cov; scr-Gill |
| Vengeance Squad | 3 | Nov 75 | The Octopus | 15 | cov; scr-Gill |
| Vengeance Squad | 4 | Jan 76 | Satana's Paradise | 15 | cov; scr-Gill |
| Vengeance Squad | 5 | Mar 76 | Death Is Driving | 15 | cov; scr-Gill |
| Vengeance Squad | 5 | Mar 76 | Rule of Fear | 2 | text story; 3 spot illos |
| Vengeance Squad | 5 | ?-77 | Death Is Driving | 15 | Modern Comics rep 1977 |
| Vengeance Squad | 5 | ?-77 | Rule of Fear | 2 | Modern Comics rep 1977 |
| Vengeance Squad | 6 | May 76 | The Diamond Queen | 13 | cov; scr-Gill |
| Vengeance Squad | 6 | ?-77 | The Diamond Queen | 13 | Modern Comics rep 1977 |
| War | 2B | Aug 81 | The Superman's Last Battle | 6 | reps Fightin' Army 100, 11-71 |
| Wild Bill Hickock and Jingles | 71 | Mar 59 | Revealment | | |
| Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal | 20 | Mar 58 | The No-Gun Man | 5 | 68-pg giant |
| Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal | 20 | Mar 58 | Branded Yellow | 5 | |
| Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal | 20 | Mar 58 | The Fastest Gun | 5 | |
| Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal | 25 | Jun 59 | Jailbreak | 5 | |
| Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal | 25 | Jun 59 | Lawman's Trial | 5 | |
| Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal | 26 | Aug 59 | The Horse of the West | 2 | |
| Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal | 39 | Nov 61 | Gun Powder Payoff | 10 | |
| Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal | 39 | Nov 61 | A Gun at His Back | 10 | cov fr int pan |

Vengeance Squad #6, May 1976

## About Pete Morisi

Pete Morisi checklist (beyond Charlton): **www.ramonschenk.nl/charltoncomics/creators/petemorisi.htm**, and obituary from the *Staten Island Advance:* **www.ramonschenk.nl/charltoncomics/creators/morisi_obituary.html**

**Alter Ego** v. 3, #32, Jan. 2004, "Pete Morisi," by Mark Evanier. Obituary and discussion of Pete's career. **Alter Ego** v. 3, #28, Sept. 2003, "The Family of Cartoonists Is *My* Family!" Interview with Lee Ames by Jim Amash; p. 8 mentions Pete Morisi's early career. Both from TwoMorrows Publishing.

**Charlton Spotlight** #3, Win./Spr. 2004, "Charlton Memories." Ron Frantz remembers PAM.

**Comic Book Artist** #9, Aug. 2000, *The Charlton Comics Story,* including "Pete Morisi Interview: Man of Thunderbolt!" by Glen Johnson; and #12, Mar. 2001, *Charlton Comics of the 1970s,* including "Pete Morisi Interview: PAM, Artist with a Vengeance," by Glen Johnson (both from TwoMorrows Publishing). These two articles are the definitive PAM interviews to date.

For further information about Johnny Dynamite, Max Allan Collins, and Terry Beatty, visit **www.thrillingdetective.com/dynamite.html**, a prime resource on the history and comics appearances of the Wild Man from Chicago.

**Menomonee Falls Gazette** #145, Sept. 23, 1974, "With Pen and Brush," by Howard Leroy Davis. One of the few (perhaps the only) published fanzine interviews with Pete Morisi during his lifetime.

**Who's Who of 20th-Century American Comic Books,** by Dr. Jerry Bails, is an indispensable source of basic data. Many thanks to Jerry for sharing it: **www.nostromo.no/whoswho/**

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# For 35¢ plain

*by* **Denis Tiani**

**THE FACT THAT** I have a complete set of *Horror Monsters* and *Mad Monsters* doesn't necessarily mean they were all that great. It just means they were monster magazines.

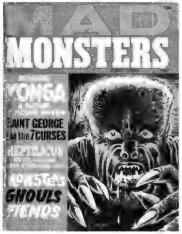
Back then if I saw a monster magazine and could afford it, I'd buy it. Even if I couldn't afford it, I'd buy it—although it didn't take much to be able to afford such luxuries back then. For 35 cents it was yours. And what did you get for 35 cents? Plenty! Sixty-four pages of photos, funny captions, articles, fan letters, ghouls and gags, interviews, pinups, stories, color cover paintings, ghoulish ads, and much more. Even a travelogue. And like all good investments, the value has only gone up over the years (although not much). And not just the monetary value either. These pulp-paper beauties just keep getting better and better as the years roll on, like fine wine, and just as intoxicating.

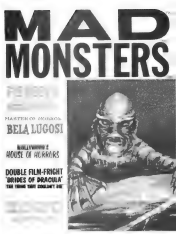
Even the ads have fermented with age. Looking them over now I could kick myself for not having taken advantage of all the wonderful opportunities: GIANT 10-FOOT INFLATABLE BOA CONSTRICTOR, $2.98. WIGGLING BUG IN A BOX, 50 cents. GIANT 8"x10" GLOSSY PHOTOS OF YOUR ALL-TIME FAVORITE MONSTERS, 6 for $1.00. Treasures beyond the dreams of avarice—plus 10 cents for postage and handling.

Still, even with all this going for them, they weren't really the real thing. *Famous Monsters of Filmland, Spacemen,* those were the real thing, with a real editor. *Horror Monsters* had an editor, too. His name was Sanzar Quasatoad.

For a while there I thought there really was a Sanzar Quasatoad. I even believed the associate editor's name was Quaszar Sanatoad. Why not? 1962 was still the tail end of the best of times. Our civilization wouldn't start falling apart until the late '60s. Until then all things were possible, even an art director named Santoad Zarquasar. I must say, though, that by the time I got to the bottom of the staff credits (Special Effects: Toadzan Quasasar), I was beginning to smell a rat.

**Above:** Denis Tiani's fancy takes flight. Art © 2005 Denis Tiani. **Background:** Steve Ditko's one and only Charlton monster magazine cover, **Mad Monsters** #1, 1961. TM & © 2005 Dennis Druktenis Publishing and Mail Order, Inc.



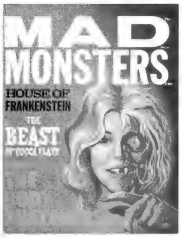

**Mad Monsters** #1–10, 1961–65, and the one-shot **Werewolves and Vampires,** 1962.
TM & © 2005 Dennis Druktenis Publishing and Mail Order, Inc.

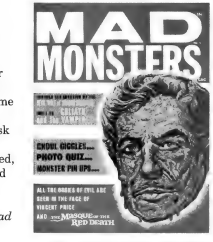
(The editor of *Mad Monsters* was Abernathy Farquad, by the way.) Besides providing the youth of America with good monster news, Charlton was also giving us our first test in critical judgment, a useful faculty that would come in handy a few years later when civilization began falling apart.

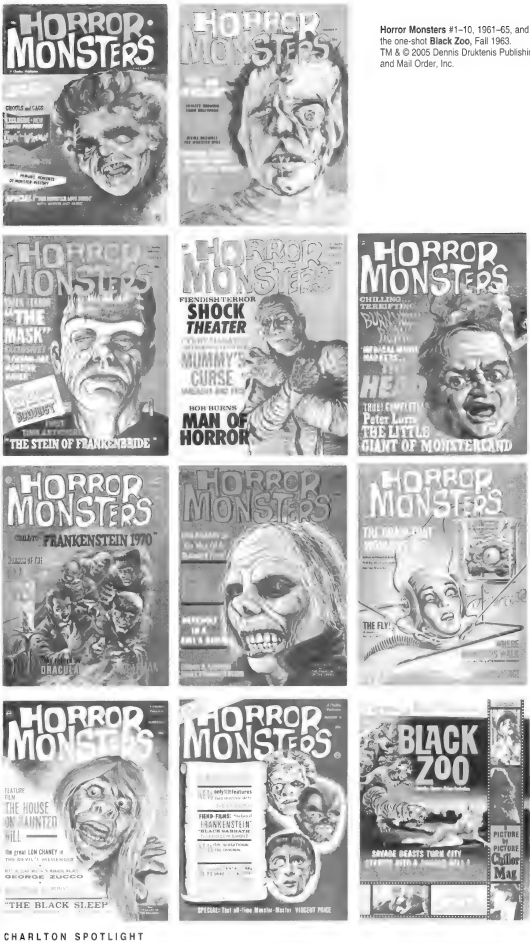
But as I say, these Charlton zines were not the real thing. Way down deep, where it counts, even less sophisticated readers, if they could read, must have suspected that Sanzar Quasatoad was not taking his job seriously. So we didn't either. We had a good laugh, then went back to *Spacemen* for the truth. But these Charltons were good magazines and a lot of fun. The fact that I still have a complete set of both, which I bought when they first came out and have held onto all these years, attests to that. The fact that they're all still more or less in pretty good condition also attests to the fact that I wasn't exactly poring over them.

My *Spacemen* collection, on the other hand, looks like the Dead Sea Scrolls.

To be fair about it, though, there is another reason those Charltons weathered the test of time so well. I had multiple copies. Trading was brisk in those days when capitalism still flourished, and while no one wanted to trade their *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, *Horror Monsters* and *Mad*




MAD
MONSTERS
GHOUL GIGGLES...
PHOTO QUIZ...
MONSTER PIN UPS...
ALL THE HORRORS OF EVIL ARE SEEN IN THE FACE OF VINCENT PRICE
AND THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH




**Horror Monsters** #1–10, 1961–65, and the one-shot **Black Zoo**, Fall 1963. TM & © 2005 Dennis Druktenis Publishing and Mail Order, Inc.

*Monsters* were up for grabs. So while I still have a complete set in pretty good condition, I also had second copies of many that were disemboweled. It's something I wouldn't have done to *Spacemen* and I wouldn't do it today to even the lowliest monster magazine, but then, with youth as my only excuse, I did it to those Charltons: I clipped out pages and taped them to the wall.

Even the name, Charlton, was subject to abuse. It was known as "Charlatan." At least to me it was. I initially misread it that way. At some point the error was pointed out to me, but by then it was too late. The damage was done. Charlatan it was and Charlatan it will remain.

But let's go back to the price for a moment: 35 cents. What does this mean in economic terms? It means you could by a monster magazine back in 1962 for 35 cents. That same magazine today will cost you around $7.50. That's about 21 times more.

Now let's look at wages. Let's say the average hourly wage in 1962 was $3.00 as compared to today's average of $8.00. That means that for an hour's work in 1962, you could buy eight monster magazines, with 20 cents left over. Today that same hour's work will buy you one lousy monster magazine, with 50 cents left over.

We're told that because

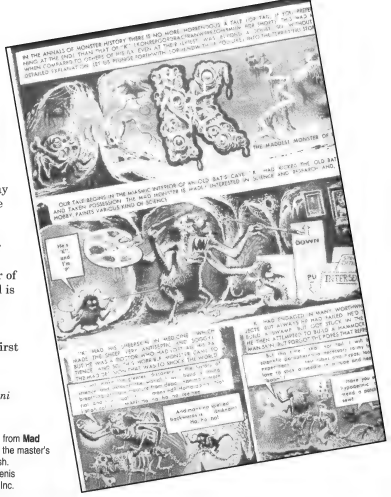
of today's higher wages everything is more or less equal, but that's obviously not the case. In 1962 you had eight times more spending power than you have today. If a kid today wanted to have the same monster-magazine purchasing power his father had back in 1962, he would have to be making $64.00 an hour. But of course prices go up with wages, so once you get to $64.00 the price of the monster magazine would be $60.00 and we'd be right back where we started from. Only worse.

Life was good back in 1962 and so were the monster magazines. It was their golden age, and while Charlton may not have been, strictly speaking, the real thing, it was close enough. And sometimes better.

For instance, *Horror Monsters* #3 contains an article ("Fiendish Feature!") entitled "I was a scream-age Monster Maker! . . . HORROR MONSTERS brings you an Exclusive Interview with Paul Blaisdell, the Maddest Monster Maker of All Time!" Today, of course, we all know who Paul Blaisdell is (in my opinion he's not only the maddest but the greatest monster maker of all time). But in 1962 this was one of the first in-depth articles ever written about him. (I believe Famous Monsters #1, 1958, was the very first.) It was the first for me, anyway.

Thanks, Charlatan.

*© 2005 Denis Tiani*



Steve Ditko's ultra-rare "K," from **Mad Monsters** #1, 1961, shows the master's early versatility with ink wash. TM & © 2005 Dennis Druktenis Publishing and Mail Order, Inc.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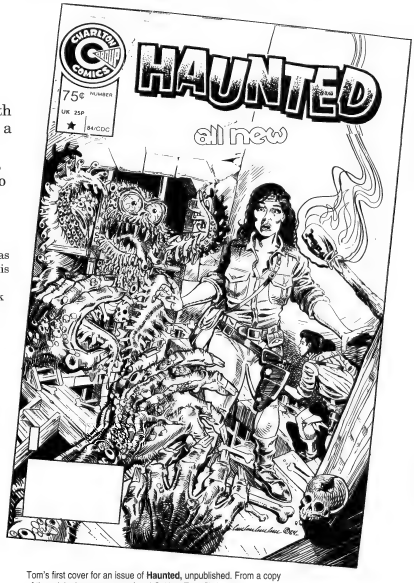
# My season with **Charlton**

## *by* **Tom Christopher**

**LIKE MANY** cartoonists, my relationship with comics goes back to a time before I was even a fan, or at least before I knew there was an organized fandom, when I was just a reader, looking for anything other than a textbook to read.

Unlike DC or Marvel, I can't remember the first Charlton book I read, but I think it was *Sarge Steel*. I know I read some on the newsstand or in barber shops and I know I was attracted to the Steve Ditko stories, but I wasn't sure if this was the same guy as the Spider-Man artist, because you didn't see artists working for more than one company back then. But I'm pretty sure it was Sarge Steel's clean commercial look done by Dick Giordano that got me to buy an early issue, back when the character was a detective and not a spy.

It was a cool time to be a kid. I started reading DCs with *Justice League* #11 and *Green Lantern* #10, so I saw the first GL/Flash stories, saw Atom and Hawkman join the JLA, etc. Within a year I'd discovered Marvel and seen the first Hulk, Spider-Man, and Thor, and seen that world grow. Now a year or two later I was watching it happen to Charlton. Dick Giordano was editing a new series of books with cool heroes, good stories, and some lovely artwork by not only the Charlton old-timers but new discoveries like Pat Boyette, Jim Aparo, and Tom Sutton. In addition, Tower comics had begun publishing, King was starting up, and Joe Simon was again packaging comics for Harvey. It was a great time to be a kid, and especially a comic reader and hopeful cartoonist who'd just discovered comic fandom. When I published my first fanzine in 1967 I called it *New Era*, because it seemed like the start of a whole new time when comics were suddenly becoming acceptable, as reflected by newspaper articles proclaiming their value (up to $50 for *Action* #1!) and best-sellers like Jules Feiffer's *The Great Comic Book Heroes*.




Tom's first cover for an issue of **Haunted**, unpublished. From a copy of the original art, courtesy of and © 2005 Tom Christopher.

In 1982 I was living on the Lower East Side of New York City, a traditional place for broke artists, and trying to break into comics. This was my second time in NYC. Having done fanzine and underground work, and having attended many comic cons and shown my work to visiting pros and tracking down what LA professionals I could, I'd made my first trip to NYC in 1978, and ended up working with Larry Hama at DC, who gave me great advice in getting a portfolio together. He introduced me to Josef Rubinstein, who I did some background work for.

My samples were good enough to get me through the door at DC and Marvel, and I was hanging out mostly in the Marvel bullpen, doing a little touch-up or background work, mostly for Mark Gruenwald, but I also worked a little for Tom DeFalco, Joe Rubinstein, and Vinnie Colletta during this time.

I called George Wildman at Charlton and described my situation as a young cartoonist. He wasn't optimistic: Charlton wasn't doing well. They hadn't published new material in a few years and he wasn't sure how much longer they would even keep the comics alive. I thanked him and continued to concentrate on Marvel.

**AS THE YEAR** progressed I got a good editorial response to the improvements in my art, and eventually ghost-inked full pages for Jack Abel and Chic Stone, but wasn't getting enough work to stay in NYC so I returned to the northwest to polish my portfolio.

Charlton Comics were still on the stands. Sure, they were reprints, but some of the covers were new, and I knew I could do good covers for them, even if they weren't paying.

Sometime in early 1984 I called George Wildman again and

**Below:** Tom's second cover for an issue of **Haunted,** to accompany Paul Kirchner's story "The Smell of Death" **(left),** both unpublished. From copies of the original art, courtesy of Tom. Story art © 2005 Paul Kirchner; cover art © 2005 Tom Christopher.

reminded him of my previous call. Yes, he said, they could use new covers, but, he stressed, they couldn't pay for them.

I told him I didn't see it like that. I thought they were awfully nice guys to offer to color my work and put it in every convenience store in America. He laughed and said to send some samples.

I had been doing basic science fiction and horror genre full-pagers as well as panel continuity, and I sent them all of the full-page work. Wildman liked my stuff and turned me over to his assistant, John Wren.

John asked me to submit some ideas for the comic *Scary Tales*, but he was unimpressed with what I did, returning them all with the note, "C'mon, Tom! This is SCARY TALES!"

John's rejection forced me to rethink what I was doing and go back to the pre-Code horror I loved for inspiration, and I came up with one of my all-time favorite drawings (archeologists and monster). I was obviously thinking about Wally Wood when I did this, but I was also really impressed with Michael Kaluta's ability to tell a story with one picture. Both John and George were very happy with this and they decided to use the cover on the next book they published, *Haunted*. I was immediately given another cover assignment, working up a design around a story by Paul Kirchner, who at the time was known for a *High Times* strip called "The Bus."

Kirchner's reference arrived quickly, and I was glad to see that Paul was another artist who looked to Wally Wood for inspiration. For some reason, I think because my first cover had replaced one already in production, this next cover was needed quickly, so to save time, and keep the look of the story, I composed a layout using elements copied directly from Paul's art.

However, before either cover could be used, Charlton discontinued publication. I was saddened by this, but figured at least I wasn't out any kind of real job like the Charlton guys were. I'd had some fun, gotten good editorial direction, and gotten a couple good drawings out of it, and besides, having deals disappear is something cartoonists learn to deal with.

**ABOUT SIX MONTHS LATER** I got a call from John Wren. Charlton was back in business, but only publishing hero books, so none of the previous covers were appropriate. Using the first cover as a springboard, I did the drawing of Doctor Graves that was used on #74. In addition, Charlton had used a number of the portfolio pieces I had sent them months before in a series of ads in the comic book trade papers announcing their return.

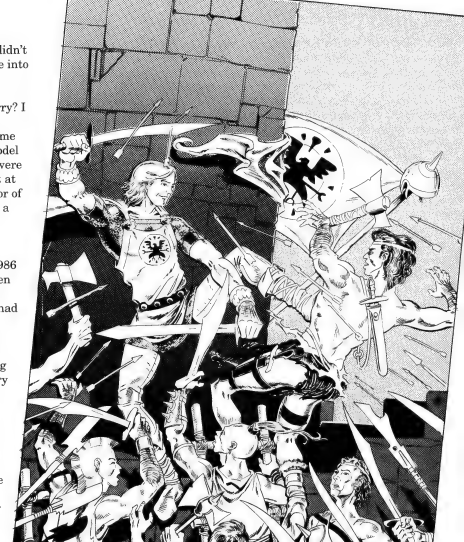
The next cover I did was for *Thane of Bagarth*, which I was looking forward to doing as I loved the character, which had been illustrated by Jim Aparo, whose work I collected. Unfortunately, there were some problems: John had accepted it without an OK from George. My inks were not as good as the pencils, and I put zipatone across the whole of the background. My plan for the cover was that Thane would be depicted in a Douglas Fairbanks manner, alone with a sword in each hand and laughing at the insurmountable odds as he defends his castle. The gray zip was to be the color of the cover, and the figures on this well-designed but poorly executed cover should've contrasted nicely against the gray with their bright colors. Ultimately George thought the gray would confuse the colors and that the cover needed more action. Because of the miscommunication the book was now late and I

**Left:** Unpublished **Dr. Graves** cover by Tom. **Above:** The original art and published cover for **Dr. Graves** #74, Nov. 1985. From copies of the original art, courtesy of Tom. Art © 2005 Tom Christopher; Dr. Graves © Charlton Comics Group.

worked feverishly to do a stand-in. Though I didn't like it as much, it was an OK job and had gone into production when Charlton again closed shop sometime in late 1985.

Again I was sad, but figured, what, me worry? I had one cover and a couple of ads published, several new drawings for my portfolio, and some lovely stats of Steve Ditko's Doctor Graves model sheets. The next summer all those drawings were in my portfolio when John Romita reviewed it at the San Diego Con, and they got me in the door of both Marvel and DC when I was back in NYC a month later.

**I DON'T KNOW** how I got involved in my last adventure with Charlton, but it was in late 1986 after I was back in NYC. Somehow I had gotten the number of a guy named Ty Ford, who was resurrecting the Charlton line. He knew me, had seen copies of my stuff around the Charlton offices, but had no idea how to contact me. By this time, Charlton had sold its best known characters to DC, but still had some, including the Vengeance Squad. Ty had some great story plans for the V-Squad, had the first issue scripted, and found a talented cartoonist named Amanda Connors to do the art. He wanted me to do the inks. We signed a contract and Amanda and I even appeared at a NYC convention as part of the new Charlton staff (at least half a dozen other creators were there too, but I've forgotten their names). Amanda's pencils were lovely, and I think my inks were pretty good, too, but in the end we found out that Ty didn't really have a position with Charlton, he was just a guy who hung out there a little and figured if he could produce material using Charlton characters he could hustle himself into an editorial post. It was a good try. He'd conned us, that's for sure, but again, there was to be no money up front on this, so I wasn't really out anything other than time, and it was good experience inking Amanda. She was a strong cartoonist even way back then and I was really pushed to keep up with her. I don't hold any bad feelings against Ty, he was out hustling and it might have worked. I just wonder about the material. Amanda and I finished our book, and there may be four or five other bootlegged versions of classic Charlton characters out there.



Tom's unpublished cover for **Thane of Bagarth.** From a copy of the original art, courtesy of and © 2005 Tom Christopher; Thane © Charlton Comics Group.

Eventually, I started working again with Josef Rubinstein when he was offered the Silver Surfer at Marvel. I started doing background inks with the first issue (though Jose Marzan, Jr., worked on the first several issues too), and eventually when Joe was unable to complete #20 I was given half of this late book with the understanding that if I could finish it over the weekend in a professional manner I could continue as inker. I inked almost all the issues between #22 and #102 and some of the annuals, as well as doing minor work on other series such as Spider-Man and X-Men, and Superman and Batman at DC.

During the late 1990s I began to concentrate on writing and since then I have done biographical work on 1950s Beat Generation writer Neal Cassady. This work has been distributed internationally and is in the permanent collection of several major universities and libraries. I have also documented the creation of the first African-American comic book in 1947 and the Golden Legacy series of Black History comics in the mid-1960s. Some of this is archived at Yale University. I wrote a history of the Commercial Comics Company, the largest producer of commercial comics in the 1950s and '60s, which was published in *Comic Book Marketplace* #102 (May 2003) and #107 (Nov. 2003). I recently did pencil and ink work for Hamster Press's update of the Eye, along with Ron Frenz and Josef Rubinstein, and I also continue to do comic book work anonymously for other artists.

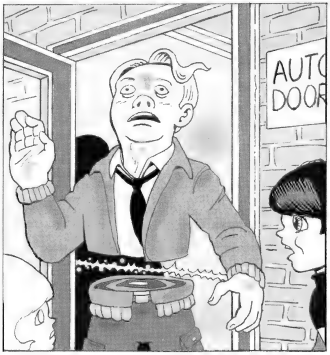
The last time I heard from John Wren he was working in the production department at DC. Though I was never in the Charlton building and did only minimal work for them in their forty-year history, I'm proud of the small part I played.

*© 2005 Tom Christopher*

Nicola Cuti

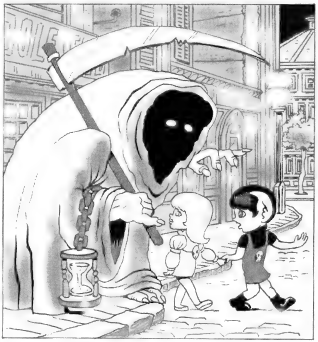
© 2005 Nicola Cuti

# THE WEIRDLINGS




I THINK THEY HAD BETTER LOWER THE **VOLTAGE** ON THEIR **ELECTRIC EYE!**

NORMALLY, I PREFER THE **TRAIN** BUT **INTER-DIMENSIONAL PORTALS** ARE SO CONVENIENT.



JUST DON'T ASK HIM FOR THE **TIME.**

HI, WE'RE SEARCHING FOR OUR **UNCLE WALDO** WHO... UH, **NEVER MIND.**

# The Division Street Ramble

**Editor's Notes & Readers' Letters**

**Charlton News & Reviews**

**Michael Ambrose, *Editor***

*Charlton Spotlight* (formerly *Space Nurses in Action*) Vol. 1, No. 4 • Summer/Fall 2005 • "Buy *Spotlight*—we need the money!"

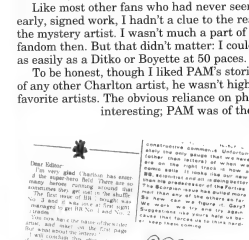
## PAM

When I was reading Charlton comics in the 1970s, one of the things I most enjoyed about them was their "house style"—or more properly their lack of one. Marvel and DC virtually owned the superhero comics field. And with some exceptions their books all tended toward a sameness of art and writing styles, for obvious reasons. Charlton, on the other hand, was the king of the genre anthology title. Every story was different, and except for the horror hosts (and Jack Keller's hot-rod heroes, and E-Man, and a few others), every character was different. The diversity of art styles in Charlton comics made them attractive to readers looking for something besides long-underwear continuity. (Charlton was also the only place you could find new Ditko work for most of that decade.)

Looking back, it was a lot of fun to see which artists would show up in the new *Ghostly Tales, Haunted, Fightin' Marines,* or what have you. So many of Charlton's "regulars" were great stylists, their work so instantly recognizable that you didn't need a credit box to know them, even if you didn't know their names: Steve Ditko. Tom Sutton. Pat Boyette. Joe Staton. Wayne Howard, the Wally Wood man. The Nicholas & Alascia team (was there a single title they did *not* appear in?). Sanho Kim. And, of course, PAM.

Like most other fans who had never seen Pete Morisi's early, signed work, I hadn't a clue to the real identity of PAM, the mystery artist. I wasn't much a part of organized comics fandom then. But that didn't matter: I could spot a PAM story as easily as a Ditko or Boyette at 50 paces.

To be honest, though I liked PAM's stories as much as those of any other Charlton artist, he wasn't high on my list of favorite artists. The obvious reliance on photo reference was interesting; PAM was of the Al Williamson/Alex Raymond school of realism, and I appreciated that, but I thought it gave his art a certain rigidity that didn't always work for the story. I preferred the more idiosyncratic styles of the Ditkos and Suttons. It would take many years, and a lot more exposure to the comics of the 1950s, to make me better appreciate Morisi's applied theories of tight, cinematic action and expression. Until I started researching his work in earnest, preparing this special tribute issue, I never realized how compelling PAM's style could be—particularly in the scores of westerns he produced for Charlton. I also learned that Pete wasn't entirely happy with his photo-ref work of the '70s, that he was experimenting with different approaches, trying to recapture some of the look of the Thunderbolt and earlier days—another reason it's too bad Charlton threw in the towel in 1976, for we never got to see where Pete would have taken his style if he'd still had regular Charlton scripts to work it out on.




Letters page announcement from **Blue Beetle** #52, Oct. 1965—and look who was writing to Charlton back then! © Charlton Comics Group.

**GREAT BIG THANKS** to **Glen Johnson,** who provided us with not only this issue's cover art but also a ton of illos, original PAM correspondence, reference materials, copies of Pete's rare '50s comics, and a zillion other helpful items that have gone into constructing this issue. My immense gratitude also to **Val and Steve Morisi** and the Morisi family for sharing their memories and biographical details and rare photos of Pete (only a fraction of which I was able to fit into the issue), and especially for permission to reproduce the two late, unpublished T-bolt pages. The Morisi estate is looking for a way to publish the complete story (and other unpublished PAM art) for the enjoyment of Pete's many fans. Personally, I think a *Pete Morisi Portfolio* book is long overdue. (Hint, hint, all you Vanguards and TwoMorrows and Fantagraphics book-publisher types out there . . .)

**I'M PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE** the beginning of two new regular features in *Charlton Spotlight.* First, "old-time fan" **Howard Leroy Davis** has agreed to let us revive his old *Menomonee Falls Gazette* column, "With Pen and Brush," in these pages. We begin by reprinting his piece on Pete Morisi from 1974; next issue will likely see a reprint of his account of visiting the Charlton offices later in '74, with added details that didn't appear in the original. Look for future articles on Pat Boyette, Joe Staton, Alex Toth, and others.

Second, we're particularly proud to offer the return of *The Weirdlings,* **Nicola Cuti's** charming cartoon series featuring Bernie and Elenora and their weird little world. Some 40 of these panel 'toons appeared in the Charlton ghost titles from 1972 to '74, filling the spaces between features and providing a little comic reassurance to younger readers. Nick has agreed to revive the series with all-new cartoons exclusively for *Spotlight.* I hope you're as excited as I am about the return of this fun, long-gone Charlton feature!

Speaking of whom, premier Cuti icono-bibliographer **Walt Wentz** is putting the final touches to his comprehensive Cuti bibliography project and hopes to publish soon; watch for details in these pages as we have them. Also, Walt is gathering material for a limited-edition, comic-sized collection of Nick's early, obscure cartoons from fanzines, con program books, etc., including early self-published Moonchild 'toons. Contact Walt at **waltw@teleport.com** for more information.

Many readers may already know that *Spotlight* regular **Bill Pearson** lost most of his legendary 50-year collection in a devastating July 2004 fire that completely destroyed his Arizona home. This nightmare that all collectors of paper ephemera dread came true for Bill, who was able to salvage very little. Even so, he has bounced back and is already in the process of accumulating new stacks. In taking it one day at a time, Bill informs me that he'll be self-publishing his mystery novel, illustrated by some of comics' greatest talents, in the near future. Write to Bill at **witzend13@hotmail.com** for details.

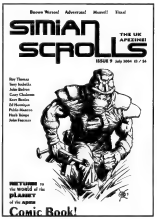
Moonchild © 2005 Nicola Cuti

The Connecticut Historical Society Museum is gearing up to take its **Heroes, Heartthrobs and Horrors** comics exhibit (see *Spotlight* #3's feature story) on the road. Interested parties should contact James Jensen, Lead Exhibit Developer, at **james_jensen@chs.org**.

## IN MEMORIAM

It's our continuing sad duty to report in these pages the passing of those comics pros who, at one time or another, passed through Charlton's halls:

**Rudy Palais,** Mar. 21, 1912–June 29, 2004. Rudy Palais had a long comics career at Fiction House, EC, Hillman, Quality, Harvey, Lev Gleason, and many other houses, including some fine *Classics Illustrated* work for Gilberton, before ending his comics career with a brief stop at Charlton. Palais lettered and drew ghost stories in *Ghostly Tales, Ghost Manor,* and *The Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves* before retiring from comics in 1969. He will always be remembered for the "wetness" of his depiction of raindrops, tears, sweat, etc., and his work is often favorably compared with "Ghastly" Graham Ingels.

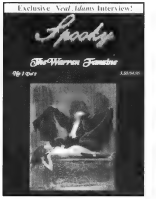



**Dale Messick,** Apr. 11, 1906–Apr. 7, 2005. Long-time chronicler of adventuring readheaded reporter **Brenda Starr,** Dalia Messick adopted a masculine-appearing first name to make her own way in the male-dominated world of cartooning. Charlton published only three issues of *Brenda Starr* (#13–15, June–Oct. 1955), consisting of newspaper reprints, but they were memorable and fun.

## POCKET REVIEWS

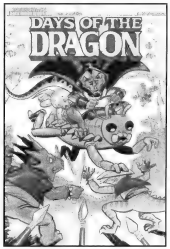
**Spooky, The Warren Fanzine.** Piers Casimir, 2 The Broadway, Gustard Wood, Wheathampstead, Herts. AL4 8LN UK, **piers@spookyfanzine.com, www.spookyfanzine.com**; 3 times/year, £3.50, $4.95; v. 2, #1, Autumn 2004, features interviews with Neal Adams and T. Casey Brennan and a column by Nick Cuti.

**Comic Effect, Emphasizing the Fun in Reading Comics.** Jim Kingman, PO Box 2188, Pasadena, CA 91102-2188, **jkcomeff@aol.com, www.comiceffect.com**; quarterly, $3.50, 6/$24; #42, Sum. 2005, is a special all-western issue, with reviews and articles by Howard Leroy Davis, Murray Ward, Jim Kingman, and Ed Quinby. Fun and recommended.




**SFA's Atomic Mouse** #3, Mar. 2004, $4.99. Themed issue "Atomic Mouse of Two Worlds" features interesting crossover stories with Charlton's and SFA's Atomic Mouses (Mice?), including a story penciled by **Joe Staton.**

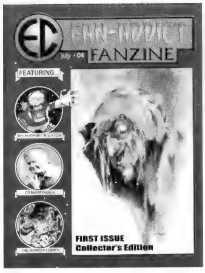
A couple of interesting new books from the long-standing team of writer **Ron Fortier** and artist **Gary Kato** have arrived. **Days of the Dragon** #1, Aug. 2003, $3.50, is an engaging tale of dragon knights and brigands and of Sparhawk, the Paradin warrior priest. Rorschach Entertainment, 3917 170th St. SW, Lynnwood, WA 98037, **www.rorschachentertainment.com**. Also from Rorschach comes **Memories of Paradise**, $4.99, a 48-page graphic novel written and drawn by **Gary Kato**. Very highly recommended! Not only that, but **Ron**'s first pulp novel **Brother Grim** is now available. Check out **www.lulu.com/content/107619** for more information, and look for it soon through Diamond *Previews,* amazon.com, and Barnes & Noble.




**Simian Scrolls, the UK Apezine,** John Roche, 25 Donovan Reed Gardens, Pembroke Dock, Pembrokeshire, Wales SA72 6EW UK, **mail@mediationhouse.com**, semiannually, £3/$6. Very well done, in-depth **Planet of the Apes** fanzine with much comics content; #9, Summer 2004, features an introduction by Roy Thomas, interviews with Tony Isabella, Ed Hannigan, Pablo Marcos, and Herb Trimpe, and other Apes-related articles, with plenty of choice art. An all-Tom Sutton issue is planned for the near future.

**EC Fan-Addict Fanzine** #1, July 2004, Roger Hill, 2463 Aloma, Wichita, KS 67211, **ecfanaddicts@lycos.com**, $10. Superb new EC fanzine from legendary fan scholar Roger Hill, with a blast-off of a first issue featuring a full-color Graham Ingels cover painting of the Old Witch, unpublished art by

Wally Wood, rare photos, art by Severin, Krenkel, and Wood, a *Hoohah!* interview with Ron Parker, EC news, reviews, and retroviews, and much more. Highly recommended!




It's been a boom year for fans of **Steve Ditko**'s Charlton work. Greg Theakston's Pure Imagination has released **The Steve Ditko Reader Vol. 2,** featuring 28 stories in 160 pages of Ditko's classic Charlton fantasy work from 1957 to 1962, from such books as *Out of This World, This Magazine Is Haunted, Strange Suspense Stories, Unusual Tales, Mysteries of Unexplored Worlds, Space Adventures,* and *Konga*, plus a trio of rare westerns from *Black Fury.* Buy this excellent full-size trade paperback now for $25 (and **Vol. 1,** with 22 stories and a long essay by Theakston on Ditko's life and the events surrounding his co-creation of Spider-Man), from Pure Imagination Publishing, 516 State St., Brooklyn, NY 11217 or at all finer comics shops.

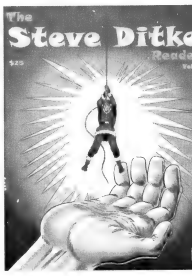
More classic Charlton Ditko can be found in **Steve Ditko: Space Wars** from Vanguard Productions, reprinting 21 stories mainly from 1954-61 *Space Adventures, Out of This World, Unusual Tales,* and *Space War,* fronted by an insightful introduction by J. David Spurlock. Both the trade paper ($16.95) and hefty limited hardcover ($34.95) sport full-color classic Ditko covers. Did we mention the word *classic*? At all comics shops or from Vanguard Prods., 390 Campus Dr., Somerset, NJ 08873, **www.creativemix.com/vanguard**.

Also from Vanguard comes an improved, revised, and greatly expanded reissue of **Pat Boyette**'s landmark **The Nightstand Chillers**, which originally appeared as a 1998 **Tales from the Edge** special. Five stories have been added as well as a 9-page portfolio, with an introduction by Alex Toth, a Boyette interview, tributes by Archie Goodwin, Jim Steranko, Gray Morrow, Tom Sutton, Rich Corben, and others, and a Boyette checklist/index. B&W, 112 pp., $16.95.

DC Comics has finally begun to bring its Charlton action-hero properties into the prestigious Archive format with **The Action Heroes Archives,** Vol. 1, collecting all the original Captain Atom stories by writers Joe Gill and David Kaler and artists Steve Ditko and Rocke Mastroserio from *Space Adventures* #33–40 and 42 and *Captain Atom* #78–82. Since this leaves out *CA* #83–89 and all the Blue Beetle, Peacemaker, Sarge Steel, etc. issues, we can hope for more Archives down the line. Pricey at $49.95 but a bargain compared with tracking down copies of the originals. At all comics shops.

If you like monster magazines—and who doesn't?—you'll love **Scary Monsters,** which recreates the thrill you used to get from the original *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and a whole lot more. Editor-Publisher Dennis Druktenis is well past his 50th quarterly issue, and all covers since #9 have been painted by Terry Beatty. **Scary** has also begun reprinting the original Charlton **Horror Monsters** and **Mad Monsters** contents, so no dedicated fan of Charlton obscurity will want to miss this magazine. See ad elsewhere on this page for ordering details.

Roy Thomas's ever-valuable **Alter Ego** occasionally strays into Charlton territory. It does so with a vengeance in issues 39, 40, 42 & 43 (Aug.–Dec. 2004), presenting UK comics scholar Frank Motler's "And Then There Were None!", a phenomenal look at the **Fawcett-Charlton** comics connections. Frank brings into focus the fascinating history of this little-understood transition period when Fawcett threw in the towel on its suit with DC and sold off its comics properties—many to third-tier Charlton, resulting in a rapid expansion by everyone's favorite Derby, CT publisher. Including a detailed index of Charlton's title acquisitions from 1953 to 1959, these are four issues that no Charlton fan will want to be without. Of course, no serious fan of comics history can afford to be without **Alter Ego** to begin with.




I can't close out the News & Reviews section without mentioning my own recent contribution to larger Charlton lore, "The Sleeping Giant: Charlton Horror Comics of the 1970s," in **Back Issue** #6 (Oct. 2004). And look for my "Pro2Pro" E-Man interview with Nick Cuti and Joe Staton upcoming in #13, shipping late 2005. See the *BI* ad on page 64 for more info.

## NEXT ISSUE

Two words: **Joe Gill.** Watch for news!

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# SPOTLIGHT MAILBAG

Write to us! P.O. Box 4201, Austin, TX 78765-4201, **charlton@flash.net**.

**Glen Johnson**
**Brigham City, UT**
In Ron's article on Pete, the guy on page 59 is not Johnny Dynamite. It's part of a daily strip Pete did where the last panel is not finished. Speaking of Johnny, in *Alter Ego* #40 is a Johnny Dynamite page. If you notice the checkered vest, this was a character named Duke Douglas. Don Heck did the art for this character for Comic Media. Pete did this story and later added the patch to his eye to make it a Dynamite story. When I first read about *Charlton Spotlight* a few years ago, I was going to write you and ask about doing a Morisi interview but changed my mind because I had hoped someone better at interviews would do the job. Now I'm sorry I didn't do it. Pete didn't care for interviews but would never have said no to me. He was a great guy and I enjoyed my three visits to his home over the years.

• ——

**Harry O. Morris**
**Albuquerque, NM**
How nice to hear from you, and *thanks* for the copies of *Charlton Spotlight!* Glad to hear the zine is coming into good distribution—Bud Plant, etc. I can see how it will be popular. It's very nicely done, and covers an important but neglected area in the comics field. Bravo!

I was never a big fan of Charlton, even though it was the underdog. I mainly remember reading a series of titles, many drawn by Steve Ditko: *Gorgo, Reptilicus,* and *Konga.* I can't remember if Ditko did the art in all of these—but, whatever, it was an odd and charming concept. Man, I wish I still had these in my possession.

My friend Denis Tiani mentioned *Charlton Spotlight* to me last year, I think, but I didn't realize you were the ed. & publisher. Hadn't realized that Tom Sutton had passed on—you've given him a fine tribute in #3.

——— • ———

**Gary Kato**
**Honolulu, HI**
Thanks for the latest *Charlton Spotlight.* As usual, it's a thoroughly enjoyable experience reading it—lively and informative articles and interviews, good layout and graphic design—a pleasure for the eye and mind. Looking forward to your next issue that promises an overview of Pete Morisi's career. I first became aware of his unique art style in *Peter Cannon...Thunderbolt.* Years later, it was a pleasant surprise when I, as Terry Beatty's art assistant and letterer, got a chance to work on a Johnny Dynamite revival.

———— •

**Anthony A. Loredo**
**Snellville, GA**
The very first issue of *Creepy* I ever purchased was #22. It featured a wonderful cover & interior art by Tom Sutton. I was hooked! Your wonderful tribute issue to Tom Sutton brought back great memories from an aging fan of the Warren & Charlton horror books. Accept a heartfelt thank-you.

——— • ———

**Marty Baumann**
***www.martybaumann.com***
Congratulations on another informative *Charlton Spotlight.* It was great fun seeing Tom Sutton's work again and the firsthand recollections of those who knew the man are invaluable. Each issue of *CS* is an improvement on the last and I commend for chronicling with dedication this often overlooked chapter in comics history.

——— • ———

**Anthony F. Smith**
**Houston, TX**
Got the copy of *Charlton Spotlight* # 3 you so kindly sent some time ago. Wonderful issue that reignited my appreciation for Tom's work. Did I ever send you a copy of the self-portrait he did for me so very many years ago? I still think the first few stories he did for *Creepy* are among the finest horror stories published in comics. Wish he'd been around to work for EC, since he fits so snugly in that tradition.

© 2005 Estate of Tom Sutton

• ———

**Batton Lash**
**www.exhibitapress.com**
Regarding *Charlton Spotlight* #3: I believe your most ambitious issue to date is the best one yet. The reminiscences of Tom Sutton were heartfelt as well as informative. The art sampling was first rate and choice—nice reproduction. If I have any criticism at all, it would be the cover—just a little too complicated for my tastes! I would've preferred seeing his self-portrait (as it were!) from the cover of the *Comic Book Guide for the Artist-Writer-Letterer.* Outside of that, I thought *CS* #3 was a tremendous issue. A pity Tom's not here to enjoy it—he would've loved it! I felt the same way about the Jack Keller piece...a nice tribute to an "ol' faithful" who was taken for granted for so long. Likewise, Bill Schelly's touching look at the delightful work and life of Grass Green. In that light, it's nice to see someone still with us—Jose Deibo—get a spotlight. A good, solid cartoonist whose terrific work is often overlooked.

I enjoyed Ron Frantz's "Charlton Memories," but please tell Ron that Dick Giordano was totally on the level when he said it was an oversight that the balance of Ron's subscription money was not refunded. I also sent my two dollars to the "greatest subscription offer ever made." I remember getting a money order for the sub on a cold December 1966 day...and it was a sad August 1967 day I received a letter from Charlton informing me that the four action-hero titles had been canceled—with the balance of the subscription—in coin—taped directly on the letter! (I think I still have that letter—if I can dig it up, I'll send you a copy, Mike!) My next door neighbor subscribed to *Blue Beetle* and he got a similar letter—balance of his subscription in coin literally attached!

As for the future, I would love to see (among many things!) a talk with Nick Cuti and Joe Staton discussing their collaborations for Charlton and an article on *Go-Go* ("buy it—we need the money!").

——— • ———

**Henry Scarpelli**
**Staten Island, NY**
You guys did it again! Another sparkling and unique *Charlton Spotlight* issue. The wonderful tribute to Tom Sutton, one of our profession's great talents, was heartwarming. To review his extended portfolio was inspiring. To put it into perspective, mine was a small contribution to Charlton. I enjoyed and appreciate the acknowledgments by Ramon Schenk's interview. Continued good luck and success. Give Ramon my regards.

PS—If I may...that *Ensign Pulver* panel on page 55 is my artwork. It's noted in my interview. (It's no big deal. Tony and I worked at Dell at the same time.)

*This is a good place to note another error in* CS *#3: Nick Cuti pointed out that the cover of* Monster Hunters *#1 (repro'd in Tom's checklist) was actually by Don Newton.*

——— • ———

**Terry Austin**
**Woodstock, NY**
Thanks for the third issue of *Spotlight!* It was most welcome and rapidly devoured (urp!). You have all of our gratitude for shining the spotlight on some of the lesser-known/remembered artists who are certainly deserving of our attention.

I enjoyed learning about Tom Sutton from his friends and peers, and relished the chance to clap my orbs on his frantic brush adornments in the full-page black-and-white cover reproductions. Wonderful stuff! Thinking back, I believe I inked Tom's work twice, once on an issue of Marvel's *Logan's Run* (that I think Klaus Janson had started to ink but left for some unknown reason) and secondly on the infamous "Alice Cooper" issue of *Marvel Spotlight.* That was the one where the editor said "do anything you want with this," and I took him literally. What poor Tom must have thought when the book came out and he discovered Kermit the Frog, Toody and Muldoon from *Car 54* and the like cavorting across his pages where none had existed before...

I also appreciate the attention to stalwarts Pete Morisi and Pat Boyette in your pages. Further reminders to me that the real cartoonists are a finite resource, a dwindling breed. Those who so filled me with admiration, who awed my imagination and made me

want to enter this profession are swiftly leaving the stage for the last time. I drew some sort of inspiration from knowing that somewhere out there were a legion of craftsmen, hunkered over a table under a solitary light in the wee hours of the morning while their families slept soundly downstairs, sucking down pots of coffee and acres of tobacco, listening to Long John Nebel talk about UFO lore on the radio, while creating real magic on a stark sheet of paper. Aye, let the legends of our tribe reflect that there was a time when real flesh and blood cartoonists walked the earth; before the fey video game fixated, manga lovin', internet obsessed creatures who wear the mantle now (I'm *kidding,* I think).

Anyway, thanks for giving Tom, Pat, Pete and their like one last bow in the *Spotlight.*

*Awesome Terry Austin has collected some of his finest drawings in* **Austin Art,** *a full-size, limited-edition 60-page portfolio available for $19.95 & $2 postage from Inky Fingers Press, PO Box 894, Woodstock, NY 12498, checks payable to Terry Austin. You cannot go wrong with this.*

———— • ————

**Michael T. Gilbert**
**mgilbert00@comcast.net**
Thanks so much for sending me the latest *Spotlight* devoted to Tom Sutton. I've long admired Tom, and at one point in the early 90s, was even slated to work with him on a *Stormbringer* sereis for First Comics. The company collapsed before we could do more than a few sample drawings, but I think Tom's work would have been well-suited to Michael Moorcock's creepy, atmospheric Elric stories.

Though Tom and I never met in person, after our aborted project I was occasionally the happy recipient of Tom's rambling phone conversations. Tom loved to talk, and it didn't seem to matter who he was chatting with. My wife Janet once answered the phone while I was out of town. It was Tom calling to say hi. He'd never talked to Janet before, but without missing a beat launched into a spirited one-hour conversation. Janet chuckled about it when she later told me about his call. What a fun character! I'll miss him.

PS—I don't know if Batton Lash mentioned this to you, but he and I are working on an upcoming *Radioactive Man* for Bongo Comics (publisher of the *Simpsons* comic book). It's a Charlton tribute and features an 8-page parody of Steve Ditko's first Captain Atom, an 11-page take-off on a Gorgo story and a 3rd Ditko-inspired story. Keep your eyes peeled later in the year!

———— ▪ ————

**Bill Schelly**
**www.billschelly.com**
Hey, thanks for *CS* #3. What a great issue! It's every bit as good as your Boyette ish! It's so good, it makes me want to start adding some of those Sutton-drawn issues to my comics want list. Bet they're hard to find. In fact, I would guess that Charlton in general is hard to find except perhaps their action hero titles of the 1960s that were bought by fans in large numbers. You've convinced me that the 1970s were the real Golden Age of Charlton. As good as their 1960s hero boom was, the material in the 1970s was better and much more diverse in terms of artistic styles. Hey, how about a Don Newton issue? Or at least a feature on his work for CDC, especially his Phantom stuff. Those are wonderful. Congratulations on a fine magazine, one that you and all fans of Charlton can be proud of.

———— • ————

**Jerry Bails**
**St. Clair Shores, MI**
I rec'd your beautiful copy of *Spotlight.* I look forward to an enjoyable nightcap with it. I'm amazed at its professional quality. Charlton fans never had it so good. I hope you can find success among all the competition. Don't tell Roy Thomas I said that. :-)

———— • ————

**Bhob Stewart**
**Plymouth, MA**
Well, I've read all the Tom Sutton pieces in #3, and they certainly brought back a slew of stray memories of Tom. Congratulations on your fine, very fine tribute to Tom. One of the treasures of the issue is Steve Fiorilla's drawing of the three blind rat priests. See how they rune! Perhaps they are praying that some publisher will step forth and hire Steve to complete Tom's projected RAT! epic and shape it into a final publishable form.

———— • ————

**James Romberger**
***Comic Art Forum***
Thanks so much for the latest issue of *Charlton Spotlight.* Tom Sutton has always been one of my favorite horror stylists. You have made me want to go and track down many of these Charlton titles to find Tom's stuff, and provided the key with the invaluable checklist you so thoughtfully included. I previously had mainly paid attention to his Warren work, what a pleasure it will be to find all this stuff I've never seen before! Sutton's talent was seriously underrated, the emotional power of his work is great and of course the major companies squandered his abilities for almost his entire career. It was a very disturbing experience to read the long interview in the *Comics Journal* with Tom just before he died—there is a strange tone, like, "Ah, Gary, you just don't know..." as Tom reacted in a weary, resigned yet humorous and patient manner to Groth's questions—it was sad for me to think of this great talent forced to draw porno, like his idol Woody before him, having put so many years into this art form with no consideration for his old age, like many other brilliant comics pioneers. As with Pat Boyette, I regret so much not contacting Sutton to tell him what his work meant to me.Your issue is absorbing and true to its subject and with a lovely cover design, all-around I think your magazine is an incredibly valuable addition to comics history.

*James Romberger publishes the excellent irregular fanzine,* Comic Art Forum. *Contact James at* **Lordsemaj@aol.com** *for details.*

———— ▪ ————

*We also heard from Gene Phillips, Dennis Ray, Wayne Markley, Paul Gravett, Chris Dingsdale, and many others, but we ran out of room—again!*

## About our contributors . . .

**Mark Burbey** has written comics for Dark Horse, Fantagraphics, Caliber, and Comico, and he's written about comics for *Comic Art, The Warren Companion, Comic Book Marketplace, Charlton Spotlight, The Comics Journal, The Comics Buyer's Guide, Comics Interview, Amazing Heroes, Rocket's Blast–Comicollector,* and *Reflex* magazine. He has also written about music and film for *Filmfax, Alternative Press, Magnet,* and *Jazziz,* and collectibles for *Baby Boomer Collectibles* and *Toy Trader.* You may contact him at **markburbey@earthlink.net**.

For more about Charlton/Marvel/DC Comics **Tom Christopher**'s work, visit his Web site: **www.tomchristopher.com**.

**Nicola Cuti** assisted Wally Wood before becoming assistant editor of the Charlton Comics line under George Wildman through the mid-1970s. He co-created E-Man with Joe Staton and wrote many of the classic stories that appeared in Charlton's various fantasy titles. Nick continues to collaborate with Staton on new E-Man and Mike Mauser stories both in print and on the Web, has worked in film animation in Hollywood, and is an independent filmmaker and producer. Current projects include SF film *Grub* and a *Captain Cosmos* TV feature, both now in production.

**Howard Leroy Davis** was born in 1934 and read the Golden Age comics when they were new. About 1950 he discovered science fiction... and girls. That took him away from comics until his mother began giving comics to his children about 1967. Then he caught the bug and became a "panelologist" (the term that Jerry Bails thought would be a good name for the comic book hobbyist). Since then he has been in fandom contributing articles and collecting both comic books and comic art...and grandchildren (of which he now has 14).

**Ron Frantz's** Charlton memories appear here regularly. Ron is the author of *Fandom: Confidential*, a critically acclaimed historical documentary of fandom (see ad in Ron's article). Currently he is putting the finishing touches to a pulp history book. Contact Ron at **midguard20@aol.com**.

**Glen Johnson** started collecting comics about the time the first issue of the JLA came out in *Brave & the Bold.* He is a charter member of Capa Alpha and was editor of *The Comic Reader* from 1964 to '65, succeeding Jerry Bails. He was an early enthusiast of comics for classroom use, teaching English as a second language to Navajo students, and at one point developed a daily and Sunday strip for NEA Syndicate focusing on Navajo culture. Lately he restores classic cars.

**Bill Pearson** succeeded Nick Cuti as Charlton Comics' assistant editor and stayed there for seven years. Along the way he introduced new creators to print via the innovative *Charlton Bullseye* series. Bill publishes the classic fanzine *witzend* and keeps promising a new issue any day now...but most recently has collaborated with **Bhob Stewart** on the definitive biographical survey *Against the Grain: Mad Artist Wallace Wood,* from TwoMorrows Publishing.

**Steve Skeates** broke into comics at Marvel, Charlton, and DC in the mid-1960s and wrote a slough of tales for Warren in the 1970s. At Charlton he scripted *Abbott & Costello,* Steve Ditko's *Question* stories, and many westerns for Pete Morisi.

**Denis Tiani**'s art can be found on covers for St. Martin's Press, Arkham House, and Dutton, among other publishers. He is the proprietor of his own Delirium Tremens Press.

# Charlton Comics Checklist: Year by Year Part 3: 1959–1962

Compiled by Dan Stevenson, with assistance from Mike Tiefenbacher; edited by Michael Ambrose • © 2005 Dan Stevenson • All cover images © Charlton Comics Group

*Year, Titles, Issues Published, and Total Number of Comics Published per Year*

## 1959

Atomic Bunny 15 (3/59) – 19 (12/59) 5
Atomic Mouse 29 (2/59) – 33 (11/59) 5
Atom the Cat 14 (1/59) – 17 (8/59) 4
Attack 56 (2/59) – 60 (11/59) 5
Battlefield Action 23 (2/59) – 27 (11/59) 5
Billy the Kid 15 (2/59) – 19 (11/59) 5
Black Fury 17 (1/59) – 21 (10/59) 5
Brides in Love 11 (2/59) – 15 (11/59) 5
Cheyenne Kid 15 (1/59) – 19 (10/59) 5
Fightin' Air Force 14 (2/59) – 18 (11/59) 5
Fightin' Army 28 (2/59) – 32 (11/59) 5
Fightin' Marines 28 (1/59) – 32 (10/59) 5
Fightin' Navy 85 (1/59) – 89 (11/59) 5
First Kiss 7 (2/59) – 11 (11/59) 5
Freddy 15 (1/59) – 19 (10/59) 5
Hot Rods and Racing Cars 38 (1/59) – 43 (12/59) 6
I Love You 21 (1/59) – 25 (10/59) 5
Just Married 6 (1/59) – 11 (12/59) 6
Kid Montana 16 (2/59) – 20 (11/59) 5
Lash LaRue Western 71 (2/59) – 75 (11/59) 5
Li'l Genius 20 (3/59) – 24 (12/59) 5
Li'l Rascal Twins 13 (1/59) – 17 (10/59) 5
Li'l Tomboy 102 (1/59) – 107 (12/59) 6
Love Diary 3 (2/59) – 7 (11/59) 5
Masked Raider, The 17 (3/59) – 21 (12/59) 5
Maverick Marshal 2 (1/59) – 6 (10/59) 5
My Little Margie 23 (3/59) – 27 (12/59) 5
My Little Margie's Fashions 1 (2/59) – 5 (11/59) 5
My Secret Life 27 (2/59) – 31 (11/59) 5
Mysteries of Unexplored Worlds 11 (1/59) – 15 (11/59) 5
Outer Space 21 (3/59) – 25 (12/59) 5
Outlaws of the West 18 (1/59) – 22 (11/59) 5
Out of this World 11 (1/59) – 16 (12/59) 6
Rocky Lane's Black Jack 26 (2/59) – 30 (11/59) 5
Rocky Lane Western 83 (1/59) – 87 (11/59) 5
Romantic Secrets 19 (1/59) – 24 (12/59) 6
Romantic Story 42 (2/59) – 46 (11/59) 5
Secrets of Love and Marriage 11 (1/59) – 16 (12/59) 6
Secrets of Young Brides 12 (1/59) – 16 (10/59) 5
Sheriff of Tombstone 2 (2/59) – 6 (11/59) 5
Six-Gun Heroes 50 (2/59) – 54 (11/59) 5
Space Adventures 27 (2/59) – 31 (11/59) 5
Space War 1 (10/59) – 2 (12/59) 2
Strange Suspense Stories 40 (2/59) – 44 (11/59) 5
Submarine Attack 15 (3/59) – 19 (12/59) 5
Sweetheart Diary 45 (2/59) – 49 (11/59) 5
Sweethearts 47 (3/59) – 51 (12/59) 5
Tales of the Mysterious Traveler 11 (2/59) – 13 (6/59) 3
Teen-Age Love 7 (2/59) – 11 (11/59) 5
Teen Confessions 1 (8/59) – 2 (11/59) 2
Teen Secret Diary 1 (10/59) – 2 (12/59) 2
Texas Rangers in Action 15 (3/59) – 19 (12/59) 5
Tex Ritter Western 44 (1/59) – 46 (5/59) 3
Timmy, the Timid Ghost 13 (1/59) – 18 (12/59) 6
Unusual Tales 15 (2/59) – 19 (11/59) 5
U.S. Air Force Comics 2 (1/59) – 7 (12/59) 6
War at Sea 29 (2/59) – 33 (11/59) 5
Wild Bill Hickock and Jingles 71 (3/59) – 75 (12/59) 5
Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal 23 (2/59) – 27 (11/59) 5

**Total 289**

## 1960

Atomic Mouse 34 (1/60) – 39 (?/60) 6
Battlefield Action 28 (1/60) – 33 (12/60) 6
Best of Marmaduke, The 1 (1960) 1
Billy the Kid 20 (1/60) – 25 (11/60) 6
Black Fury 22 (1/60) – 27 (11/60) 6
Brides in Love 16 (1/60) – 21 (11/60) 6
Cheyenne Kid 20 (1/60) – 25 (11/60) 6
Fightin' Air Force 19 (1/60) – 24 (12/60) 6
Fightin' Army 33 (1/60) – 38 (11/60) 6
Fightin' Marines 33 (1/60) – 38 (11/60) 6
Fightin' Navy 90 (1/60) – 95 (11/60) 6
First Kiss 12 (1/60) – 17 (11/60) 6
Freddy 20 (1/60) – 25 (11/60) 6
High School Confidential Diary 1 (6/60) – 4 (12/60) 4
Hot Rods and Racing Cars 44 (2/60) – 49 (12/60) 6
I Love You 26 (1/60) – 31 (11/60) 6
Just Married 12 (2/60) – 16 (11/60) 5
Kid Montana 21 (1/60) – 26 (12/60) 6
Konga 1 (1960) 1
Lash LaRue Western 76 (1/60) – 81 (12/60) 6
Li'l Genius 25 (2/60) – 30 (12/60) 6
Li'l Rascal Twins 18 (1/60) 1
Love Diary 8 (1/60) – 13 (12/60) 6
Masked Raider, The 22 (2/60) – 27 (12/60) 6
Maverick Marshal 7 (1/60) 1
My Little Margie 28 (2/60) – 33 (12/60) 6
My Secret Life 32 (1/60) – 37 (12/60) 6
Mysteries of Unexplored Worlds 16 (1/60) – 21 (11/60) 6
Outlaws of the West 23 (1/60) – 28 (11/60) 6
Romantic Secrets 25 (2/60) – 30 (12/60) 6
Romantic Story 47 (1/60) – 52 (12/60) 6
Secrets of Love and Marriage 17 (2/60) – 22 (12/60) 6
Secrets of Young Brides 17 (1/60) – 22 (11/60) 6
Sheriff of Tombstone 7 (1/60) – 12 (11/60) 6
Six-Gun Heroes 55 (2/60) – 60 (12/60) 6
Space Adventures 32 (1/60) – 37 (12/60) 6
Space War 3 (2/60) – 8 (12/60) 6
Strange Suspense Stories 45 (1/60) – 50 (11/60) 6
Submarine Attack 20 (2/60) – 25 (12/60) 6
Sweetheart Diary 50 (1/60) – 55 (11/60) 6
Sweethearts 52 (2/60) – 57 (12/60) 6
Teen-Age Confidential Confessions 1 (7/60) – 3 (11/60) 3
Teen-Age Love 12 (1/60) – 17 (11/60) 6
Teen Confessions 3 (1/60) – 8 (11/60) 6
Teen Secret Diary 3 (2/60) – 8 (12/60) 6
Texas Rangers in Action 20 (2/60) – 25 (12/60) 6
Timmy, the Timid Ghost 19 (2/60) – 24 (12/60) 6
Unusual Tales 20 (1/60) – 25 (12/60) 6
U.S. Air Force Comics 8 (2/60) – 13 (12/60) 6
War at Sea 34 (2/60) – 39 (12/60) 6
Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal 28 (1/60) – 33 (11/60) 6

**Total 280**

**Li'l Rascal Twins** #13, Jan. 1959

**Black Fury** #18, Apr. 1959

**Submarine Attack** #21, Apr. 1960

## 1961

Atomic House 40 (1/61) — 45 (11/61) 6
Battlefield Action 34 (2/61) — 39 (12/61) 6
Billy the Kid 26 (1/61) — 31 (11/61) 6
Black Fury 28 (1/61) — 33 (11/61) 6
Brides in Love 22 (1/61) — 27 (11/61) 6
Caroline Kennedy 1 (1961) 1
Cheyenne Kid 26 (1/61) — 31 (11/61) 6
Fightin' Air Force 25 (2/61) — 30 (12/61) 6
Fightin' Army 39 (1/61) — 44 (12/61) 6
Fightin' Marines 39 (1/61) — 44 (11/61) 6
Fightin' Navy 96 (1/61) — 101 (11/61) 6
First Kiss 18 (11/61) — 23 (11/61) 6
Freddy 26 (1/61) — 31 (11/61) 6
Gorgo 1 (5/61) — 4 (11/61) 4
High School Confidential Diary 5 (2/61) — 10 (12/61) 6
Hot Rods and Racing Cars 50 (2/61) — 55 (12/61) 6
Hunk 1 (8/61) — 3 (12/61) 3
I Love You 32 (1/61) — 37 (11/61) 6
Just Married 17 (1/61) — 22 (11/61) 6
Kid Montana 27 (2/61) — 32 (12/61) 6
Konga 2 (8/61) — 4 (12/61) 3
Lash LaRue Western 82 (2/61) — 84 (6/61) 3
Li'l Genius 31 (2/61) — 36 (12/61) 6
Love Diary 14 (2/61) — 19 (12/61) 6
Masked Raider, The 28 (2/61) — 30 (6/61) 3
My Little Margie 34 (2/61) — 39 (12/61) 6
My Secret Life 38 (2/61) — 43 (12/61) 6
Mysteries of Unexplored Worlds 22 (1/61) — 27 (11/61) 6
Nurse Betsy Crane 12 (8/61) — 14 (12/61) 3
Outlaws of the West 29 (1/61) — 34 (11/61) 6
Reptilicus 1 (8/61) — 2 (10/61) 2
Romantic Secrets 31 (2/61) — 36 (12/61) 6
Romantic Story 53 (2/61) — 58 (12/61) 6
Secrets of Love and Marriage 23 (2/61) — 25 (6/61) 3
Secrets of Young Brides 22 (1/61) — 28 (11/61) 5
Sheriff of Tombstone 13 (1/61) — 17 (9/61) 5
Six-Gun Heroes 61 (2/61) — 66 (12/61) 6
Space Adventures 38 (2/61) — 43 (12/61) 6
Space War 9 (2/61) — 14 (12/61) 6
Strange Suspense Stories 51 (1/61) — 56 (11/61) 6
Submarine Attack 26 (2/61) — 31 (12/61) 6
Sweetheart Diary 56 (1/61) — 61 (11/61) 6
Sweethearts 58 (2/61) — 63 (12/61) 6
Teen-Age Confidential Confessions 4 (1/61) — 9 (11/61) 6
Teen-Age Love 18 (1/61) — 23 (11/61) 6
Teen Confessions 9 (1/61) — 14 (11/61) 6
Teen Secret Diary 9 (2/61) — 11 (6/61) 3
Texas Rangers in Action 26 (2/61) — 31 (12/61) 6
Timmy, the Timid Ghost 25 (2/61) — 30 (12/61) 6
Unusual Tales 26 (2/61) — 31 (12/61) 6
U.S. Air Force Comics 14 (2/61) — 19 (12/61) 6
War at Sea 40 (2/61) — 42 (6/61) 3
Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal 34 (1/61) — 39 (11/61) 6

**Total 282**

## 1962

Atomic House 46 (1/62) — 51 (12/62) 6
Attack nn (1962) 1
Battlefield Action 40 (2/62) — 44 (11/62) 5
Billy the Kid 32 (1/62) — 37 (12/62) 6
Black Fury 34 (1/62) — 39 (12/62) 6
Brides in Love 28 (1/62) — 33 (12/62) 6
Cheyenne Kid 32 (1/62) — 37 (12/62) 6
Confidential Diary 12 (5/62) — 15 (11/62) 4
Cynthia Doyle, Nurse in Love 66 (10/62) — 67 (12/62) 2
Fightin' Air Force 31 (3/62) — 35 (11/62) 5
Fightin' Army 45 (3/62) — 49 (11/62) 5
Fightin' Marines 45 (1/62) — 50 (11/62) 6
Fightin' Navy 102 (1/62) — 107 (12/62) 6
First Kiss 24 (1/62) — 29 (12/62) 6
Freddy 32 (1/62) — 37 (12/62) 6
Gorgo 5 (1/62) — 10 (12/62) 6
Gorgo's Revenge 1 (1962) 1
Green Planet nn (1962) 1
High School Confidential Diary 11 (3/62) 1
Hot Rods and Racing Cars 56 (3/62) — 60 (11/62) 5
Hunk 4 (3/62) — 8 (11/62) 5
I Love You 38 (1/62) — 43 (12/62) 6
Just Married 23 (1/62) — 28 (12/62) 6
Kid Montana 33 (2/62) — 37 (11/62) 5
Konga 5 (3/62) — 9 (11/62) 5
Li'l Genius 37 (3/62) — 41 (11/62) 5
Love Diary 20 (3/62) — 24 (11/62) 5
Marco Polo nn (1962) 1
My Little Margie 40 (3/62) — 44 (11/62) 5
My Secret Life 44 (2/62) — 47 (9/62) 4
Mysteries of Unexplored Worlds 28 (1/62) — 33 (12/62) 6
Nurse Betsy Crane 15 (3/62) — 19 (11/62) 5
Outlaws of the West 35 (1/62) — 40 (12/62) 6
Reptisaurus 3 (1/62) — 8 (12/62) 6
Return of Konga, The nn (1962) 1
Romantic Secrets 37 (3/62) — 41 (11/62) 5
Romantic Story 59 (3/62) — 63 (11/62) 5
Secrets of Young Brides 29 (1/62) — 34 (12/62) 6
Six-Gun Heroes 67 (3/62) — 71 (11/62) 5
Space Adventures 44 (2/62) — 48 (11/62) 5
Space War 15 (3/62) — 19 (11/62) 5
Strange Suspense Stories 57 (1/62) — 62 (12/62) 6
Submarine Attack 32 (3/62) — 36 (11/62) 5
Sue and Sally Smith 48 (11/62) 1
Sweetheart Diary 62 (1/62) — 65 (8/62) 4
Sweethearts 64 (3/62) — 68 (11/62) 5
Teen-Age Confidential Confessions 10 (1/62) — 15 (12/62) 6
Teen-Age Love 24 (1/62) — 29 (12/62) 6
Teen Confessions 15 (1/62) — 20 (12/62) 6
Texas Rangers in Action 32 (3/62) — 36 (11/62) 5
Timmy, the Timid Ghost 31 (3/62) — 35 (11/62) 5
Unusual Tales 32 (2/62) — 36 (11/62) 5
U.S. Air Force Comics 20 (3/62) — 24 (11/62) 5
Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal 40 (1/62) — 45 (12/62) 6

**Total 257**

## COMIC-TYPE MAGAZINES, 1959–1962

Crazy v4#8 (12/59) 1

**Total 1**

The **year-by-year checklist** of Charlton comics is provided through the courtesy of Dan Stevenson, who has personally seen 99.5% of the books. Mike Tiefenbacher was also a major source of the data. In future issues we will continue the series and compile expanded versions of this checklist, including prior/subsequent title and refined month/year data as this information becomes organized. The ultimate goal is a complete index of all Charlton comics. Your input is not only desirable but essential!

Please send any comments and corrections care of this magazine. In the meantime, remember: ***Charlton Comics Give You More!***

More of Captain Atom
SPACE ADVENTURES
WHO WERE THOSE BEAUTIFUL CREATURES??
HAS CAPTAIN ATOM MET HIS MATCH??
BE SURE TO READ...
"A VICTORY FOR VENUS"

**Space Adventures** #37, Dec. 1960

**Reptilicus** #1, Aug. 1961

Second Month of Love
LOVE DIARY
Cal and Jenny were deeply in love! The wedding date was set and suddenly something happened...
IT'S DEATH FOR ONE!

**Love Diary** #22, July 1962

# Charlton SPOTLIGHT

is all about the wonderful world of the **Charlton Comics Group,** from ***Abbott and Costello*** to ***Zoo Funnies*** and everything in between! Complete your ***Charlton Spotlight*** collection today!

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Celebrating the life and art of a Charlton Comics legend, with memoirs and commentary by **Joe Gill, Steve Skeates, Alex Toth, Bill Pearson, Jim Amash, Ron Frantz, Don Mangus,** and **Robin Snyder** • critical commentary by **Ramon Schenk** and **James Cassara** • biographical and bibliographical information, including a comprehensive checklist of Boyette's work in comics and film • extensive Boyette cover gallery • complete Charlton Comics checklist by title, with issue totals • custom cover illustration by the late, great **Tom Sutton!** • news, reviews and more! • **48 pages, $6.95**

Charlton
SPOTLIGHT
a conversation with AC Comics' BILL BLACK
the return of PAT BOYETTE!
RON FRANTZ: on the road to Charlton Press

## Charlton Spotlight #2 (Summer 2002)

A cornucopia of Charlton fun, featuring an interview with AC Comics' **Bill Black** • **Ron Frantz's** memoir of visiting **Steve Ditko** and **Charlton Press** • more **Pat Boyette,** including **unpublished Peacemaker** art • **Ron Fortier** and **Gary Kato** on their creation of one of Charlton's last superheroes, **Mr. Jigsaw** • classic **Joe Shuster** reprint from ***Strange Suspense Stories*** • Charlton Comics year-by-year checklist, part 1 • news, reviews and more! • 40 pages, $5.95

## Charlton Spotlight #3 (Spring 2004) • Tom Sutton tribute

Remembering the life and unique Charlton art of one of comics' great stylists, featuring memoirs and commentary by **Steve Skeates, Nicola Cuti, Bill Pearson, Batton Lash, Jim Amash, Bhob Stewart, Steve Fiorilla,** and **Stefan Petrucha** • rare and **unpublished** photos and art • classic Sutton interview by **Mark Burbey** • Sutton Charlton checklist, cover gallery, and classic reprint • **Jose Delbo** and **Henry Scarpelli** interviews • **Pete Morisi, Jack Keller,** and **Grass Green** spotlights • Charlton Comics year-by-year checklist, part 2 • news, reviews and more! • 72 pages, $7.95

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**—Roy Thomas**
***Alter Ego***

*"Holy crap—I **love** this magazine!"*
**—Brett Warnock**
**Top Shelf Productions**

*"One of my favorite publications."*
**—Bill Schelly**
**Hamster Press**

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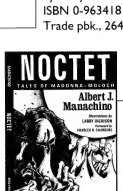


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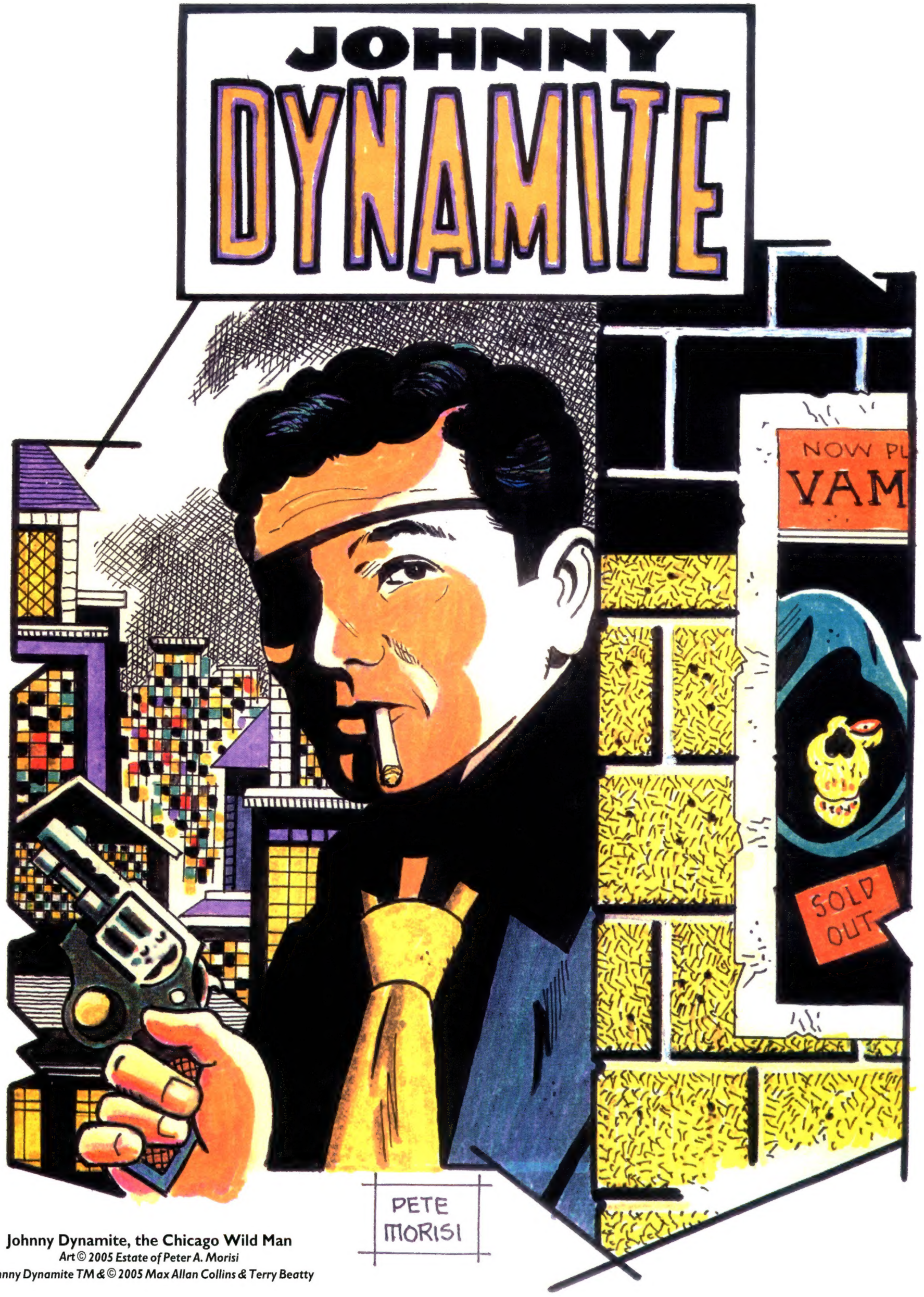


**Johnny Dynamite, the Chicago Wild Man**

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